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D E L I N E A T I O N
O F T H E
N A T U R E and O B L I G A T I O N
O F
M O R A L I T Y.

W I T H
R E F L E X I O N S upon Mr. H U M E's
Book, intitl'd, *An Inquiry concerning the
Principles of Morals.*

E D I N B U R G H:
Printed by H A M I L T O N, B A L F O U R, and N E I L L.
M, D C C, L I I I.



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DELINEATION
OF THE
NATURE and OBLIGATION
OF
MORALITY.

SECT. I.

General Observations concerning Morality.

MORALITY is a subject the most interesting that can employ the faculties of the human mind ; for, upon right notions, and a suitable practice of it, our happiness chiefly depends ; and that, whether we are considered as individuals, or conjoined in society with others : this subject, therefore, merits well to be considered with the strictest attention and most impartial regard.

It has, however, unluckily been the fate of morality to be involved in more confusion, and perplexed with greater difficulties, than perhaps any science whatever.

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THIS effect will scarcely be accounted for satisfactorily from the common allegations of the imperfection and imbecillity of the human understanding; other more special causes very probably must concur.

INDEED the complex and extensive nature of the subject itself, cannot fail here to meet our observation: for it is the province of morality, first to ascertain that in which our chief happiness consists, and then to discover all those means which may direct us in the pursuit, and secure us in the possession, of it. This view of things naturally presents us with a large field, where men may take a thousand different roads, and form as many notions of the particular good, as are the numberless methods they may pursue in order to attain it. The whole of the human heart must here be laid open; the temper and affections must be nicely examined, and our natural connexions with other beings, as well as our relations to moral agents, must be brought under our review. When such a variety of objects crowd upon the mind, it is no wonder that we are in danger of being misled by false appearances of things.

FROM much the same cause proceeds another source of error, tho' of a more external nature. Our moral ideas, especially, are so numerous and so curiously modified, that it is impossible to find words to express these ideas particularly, and far less their different modes; we are, therefore, obliged often to use the same word in a great many different senses: by this we are in danger of changing the state of the case, whereby we must



must be led into false conclusions from specious reasonings, especially where the chain of such reasonings may run out to any considerable length.

BUT perhaps nothing contributes more to perplex and embarrass morality, than the prejudices which arise from our own minds. There is a sensible and apparent derangement and disorder of our passions and affections, which are far from being properly balanced, and duly proportioned to the nature of those objects by which they are excited. These irregular passions, therefore, by recommending too much their favourite objects, create a strong bias upon the mind, which makes us willing to reconcile and accommodate a scheme of morality to the bent of passion and a false view of interest, rather than to investigate it with an open candour, and a sincere regard to truth. It is no wonder, then, if such an unfair procedure misleads us into false opinions, and a wrong conduct.

BUT, in whatsoever way the difficulties of morality may be accounted for, they cannot be entirely dissembled. So sensible were some of the greatest of the antient philosophers of these difficulties, that they thought a revelation from heaven was necessary, to give us proper instruction in our duty: nay, they carried this opinion so far as to believe, that such revelation was a necessary voucher for the doctrine of a divine providence; and that, without it, all the arguments deduced from the admirable structure and wise arrangement of every part of the visible world, were not sufficient fully to support that doctrine. This e-

vidently appears from a conversation betwixt Socrates and Aristodemus concerning providence; of which Xenophon, in his *memorabilia*, gives us a particular account. But, notwithstanding the difficulties which we may meet with in moral disquisitions, it is at least certain, that the difference betwixt virtue and vice is strongly founded in nature. This difference is sensibly felt, and readily acknowledged, at least, by the generality of mankind. A reflexion upon this indisputable phenomenon may give great encouragement in our inquiries concerning virtue.

WHAT we propose at present is not to enter much into particulars, but only to make some general observations, in order to discover the native excellence of virtue, and to point out the particular force of its obligation; from whence, at least, the great lines of duty may appear in a clear light.

IN the first place, it may be taken for granted, that private happiness (considered in its full extent) must be the chief end and object of every man's pursuit: this the antient philosophers universally agreed in, and made it their first inquiry, in what the *summum bonum*, or chief happiness of man, consisted.

THIS appears to be a principle that forces itself upon the mind with an irresistible evidence; for it is no less than a contradiction to suppose, that we can desire, or be pleased with any thing preferably to our chief happiness; that is, to that which, in its nature, must be the most pleasing and desirable of all things else.

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LET us suppose a man so constituted, as to have more pleasure in the contemplation of the happiness of another being, than in the contemplation of his own; even that very pleasure is really his own proper happiness; and self-love would, in this case, prompt him chiefly to pursue the happiness of that other being.

ON the other hand, it is the allowed characteristic of virtue, social virtue, (which we are chiefly to consider) that it prompts us to pursue the happiness of others, with whom we live in society, preferably to every other object, which affords us private pleasure or gratification.

THESE two principles are, in their nature, very different, and may readily clash and interfere with one another, especially as there are a thousand objects, beside the good of others, calculated to give us pleasure, and to gratify some correspondent passion or principle in our nature. The cause of virtue, therefore, cannot be supported, without shewing that such is the constitution of things, that the good of others, duly pursued, is an object which, upon the whole, affords more true happiness, than what arises from any or every other private gratification besides.

ARISTOTLE seems to have been abundantly sensible of the truth of what we have here asserted; and therefore, in his ninth book of ethics, he condemns self-love when it directs to the pursuit of riches, honours, pleasures, or such external things, in which we may interfere with the interests of other men; but he approves of the same principle, when it leads to the pursuit of virtue,

and the good of others ; and observes, that a man thereby pursues his truest interest, and yet is not, upon that account, denominated selfish.

LET us, in the mean time, suppose what we shall afterwards endeavour to prove, that virtue is our truest happiness. To this idea of virtue it may be objected, that it is contrary to a common character ascribed to virtue, *viz.* that it is disinterested. But there appears no great difficulty in removing this objection ; for, in reality, it must be acknowledged true, that virtue pursues and promotes our best interest ; were it otherwise, how would it be possible to recommend it to the esteem and pursuit of mankind ; and even my Lord Shaftsbury, Mr. Hutchison, and others who have talked biggest of the disinterestedness of virtue, have ever been obliged to support their scheme, by the consideration of these purer joys, and superior delights, which arise from the immediate gratification of the kind and virtuous affections.

THE interest therefore meant and supposed as derogatory to virtue, is not the self-enjoyment which attends a virtuous action, or the satisfaction naturally consequent upon it ; but it is an interest of quite a different kind : for example, when a man does an action materially good, not from the love of goodness, but for the sake of a bribe, the action is said to be selfish and interested, because it does not flow from a proper motive, but from an interest of a lower kind ; and the same bribe would probably have prompted such a man to do the contrary bad action. We
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may observe further, that, when virtue is said to be our truest interest, this is not always to be confined to the immediate pleasures of virtue, but must, at least sometimes, relate to a distant good which it has in view. For it is certain, that virtue often engages us in hardships, toils, and difficulties; it has often strong passions to mortify and subdue: whereas, on the other hand, vice frequently insinuates itself with an immediate smile, and tempts us with present gratifications, often too flattering and delusive. It appears, therefore, evident, that, to judge of these two rivals only from the present good they set before us, without attending to their distant consequences, must be apparently dangerous, and disadvantageous to the cause of virtue. If it be a proper recommendation of virtue, that it gives us satisfaction in the mean time, it cannot justly be thought inconsistent with its nature, that it secures to us good in reversion. Virtue is not a blind and instantaneous instinct, but an enlightened principle which naturally looks forward, and weighs the distant consequences of actions and things; and is therefore very properly influenced by views of distant good. Indeed, in order to maintain the dignity and excellence of virtue, we must take care what notion we form of that happiness which she proposes to us in reversion; it must be entirely consistent with its nature, or flow from its immediate exercise; we should conceive of it as an improved and exalted state, by which virtue may have a nobler, a more free and extensive influence and operation. Such a pure and sublime

lime idea of happiness must effectually engage our pursuit, and establish virtue upon the most firm and solid foundation.

BUT it may still be objected, that the scheme we have laid down, does not agree to the whole of human nature; it appears to resolve all into self-love; whereas we have other affections, particularly benevolence, which leads to the good of others as an object or end entirely independent of self-love. This is, no doubt, true, tho' not peculiar to benevolence; the same thing may be said of the love of power, honour, or even of any sensible object that yields us gratification and delight. The pleasures arising from those affections or passions are not created by self-love, but depend upon the original frame and constitution of our nature. But then these pleasures once supposed, become the object of self-love; that is, the mind, by reflecting and attending to what it feels, or has felt within itself, estimates the quantity of pleasure and delight arising from the gratification of the several affections; and, wherever it discovers the highest pleasure, it must give the preference to that affection, and the object exciting it. In consequence of this, benevolence can only be preferred to other affections, when we suppose it affords us higher pleasure than these. This Mr. Hutchison is sensible of, when he says, "the suspicions against virtue must be entirely removed, if we have a moral sense; and public affections, whose gratifications are constituted, by nature, our most intense and durable pleasures:" how far, or in what respects, this is,

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or may be, the case, we may afterwards have occasion to consider.

IN the mean time, it is abundantly evident, from what has been said, that the benevolent scheme is so far from contradicting the principle of self-happiness laid down, that it amounts to a proof and confirmation of it. For it would be impossible immediately to support the cause of virtue and benevolence, without proving the pleasures, thence arising, to be superior to the gratifications of other passions and affections. It may be shortly observed, that, when self-love is thus engaged, in support of benevolence, the natural object of our affection is not at all changed; it is still the good of others we pursue; and, by means of this additional principle, we are animated to pursue it with greater constancy and delight.

By a due improvement of the observations which have been already made, we may be able to discover, how virtue leads to happiness, and yet in what respect it may be properly called disinterested; and we may thereby get clear of a great deal of confusion, with which this subject has been perplexed.

WE shall now proceed to consider the general nature of virtue, how far it is established in the human frame, and the constitution of things, and what the peculiar force of its obligation amounts to.

MORAL writers, even the antients, tho' not with the same precision as the moderns, have deduced the first principles of virtue from the moral

ral sense; a sense which immediately represents a certain temper and conduct in a light peculiarly beautiful: and, by this representation of things, virtue is naturally recommended to our approbation and pursuit. This appears to be the first motive to virtue, evidently founded in the frame and constitution of man. But then, as it is an immediate sense, a kind of natural instinct, it is not in itself sufficient to support the cause of virtue, or to give it a superior strength and command. For it is to be observed, that, besides the moral sense, and those affections which appear chiefly to co-operate with it, there are various instincts and passions in the human frame, which lead to objects of a very different nature. These, experience tells us, are often more strong and impetuous, and consequently in an immediate competition, must prevail over the moral sense, and entirely frustrate its tendency. It is therefore necessary, to bring additional aid to virtue from other principles of our nature: and the principle which distinguishes the human mind, which is the conspicuous and peculiar ornament of its nature, and the source of all its improvement, is the power of reflexion and reasoning.

THE inferior animals seem to be governed by certain instincts, appetites, and passions; these are to them the chief principles of action, and guide them to their distinct goal, by an immediate, regular, and uniform impulse. But the case is very different with regard to man; if his actions were abandoned to the blind influence
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of instinct or passion, 'tis too evident to need demonstration, that this would, at least probably, issue in a conduct as pernicious to himself as detrimental to society. To prevent this fatal effect, man is endued with reason and reflexion, whereby he can recognise his temper and affections, and weigh the consequences of his actions: he is hereby enabled to subdue or regulate the self-affections, by estimating the real value of their objects, and thereby lessening their influence. Thus he may remedy the disorder of passion; establish an agreeable tranquillity in his own mind; and, at the same time, add strength and vigour to the virtuous affections, by attending to their intrinsic excellence, and surveying all those happy effects which they naturally produce: and, by this means, he may constantly carry on the improvements of virtue; and, from his increasing knowledge of the general constitution, be more and more satisfied that it is the great end of his nature; and therefore that its obligation must be compleat.

LET us here pause a moment, to consider the importance of this part of our constitution, whereby we are rendered capable of a continued progressive improvement.

MAN has evidently planted in his mind the seeds and first principles of wisdom and virtue. But it is equally manifest, that, if these shall lie altogether uncultivated, they will contribute very little to raise him to that degree of happiness, perfection and dignity, of which nature has certainly made him capable. In a mind entirely neglected,

neglected, these excellent seeds will hardly spring up, and their influence must be stifled by the prevalence of sensual pleasures and pursuits. In this case, man will be little distinguished from the other animals, and the objects of their pursuit will be much the same. Nay, perhaps, man will not have such a sincere relish of animal pleasures as these have. That nobler principle with which he is endued, however oppressed, may yet give him some secret discontent, or his natural desires of greater degrees of happiness may sensibly dash all his present enjoyments.

If we, then, consider man in a merely natural state, without the advantages of culture and improvement, he must make a very inconsiderable figure, and hardly claim any great superiority over the other animals. Nay, it will be well, if he does not render himself still more base than these, by degenerating into unnatural vices. On the other hand, when we consider the perfection to which the human nature may be carried, by a just education, by proper culture and a vigorous industry; our ideas of it must be wonderfully enlarged.

'Tis in this manner that man makes a continual progress in wisdom and knowledge, and carries on the improvement of the arts and sciences to an unlimited perfection. By the same means, he enlarges and strengthens the habits of virtue, and promotes that temper of mind and purpose of heart which most effectually secure his own peace, and the happiness of all with whom he has any intercourse. Hereby it is, that a Socrates

is distinguished from the barbarous Indian, whose mind may naturally be capable of an equal degree of perfection in wisdom and virtue. It is by means of this progressive improvement, that man may rise in the scale of being, and of happiness, to such a height as his present conceptions cannot well reach. But as, in every pursuit, it is the prospect of advantage that excites action, and animates industry; so our improvements in virtue must chiefly depend upon its supposed tendency to advance our happiness: and therefore all the reflexions which we make upon the whole analogy of things must unite in the confirmation of this necessary and important principle. For it would be impossible to carry the moral system to its full perfection, unless we should suppose the whole frame and order of things to be such as always to favour our advances in virtue, and to discourage our relapse into vice.

If ever our reflexions should carry us to any remarkable point of the constitution, from whence virtue should appear destitute of every character of excellence to distinguish it from vice; for example, if we should suppose them quite indifferent in the estimation of the Deity, all improvement must here stop, since there could be no proper motive to forward it. Nay, what is worse, the difference betwixt virtue and vice, must appear founded rather in imagination than the truth of things, which must ever be conformable to the ideas in the divine mind. This reflexion must sensibly cool our ardour in the pursuit of virtue, give a new turn

to our thoughts, and dispose us to prefer vice whenever it falls in with our present taste and inclination. How pernicious such a theory must be to the cause of virtue, and the interest of mankind, is too clear and striking to need any illustration.

BUT, to resume the thread of our argument, we shall now consider what strength and advantage the moral sense receives from the proper exercise of our reflecting faculty. 'Tis not our design nicely to analyse the moral sense, and to examine its various modifications, but only to make such general observations as may appear most material for our present purpose.

THE moral sense, then, as has been observed, represents a certain temper and conduct as beautiful and agreeable; but there are often other passions, which, by too much recommending their favourite objects, determine us to the pursuit of these. However, when the gratification of passion is over, and we are disposed calmly to reflect upon our conduct, we plainly disapprove of it; we now wish we had acted otherwise, and complied with the suggestion of the moral sense. From this reflexion, the moral sense must, no doubt, receive considerable strength; because this self-disapprobation, tho' supposed even weak, yet, as it is constant, and still breaks in upon our calm thoughts, must therefore merit the greater regard. For, whilst this remains with us, we can never possess a full tranquillity of mind; whereas, on the other hand, a victory over a bad passion, tho' the struggle may, in the mean
time,

time, be painful, yet afterwards affords us a pleasing reflexion.

THE moral sense first recommends virtue, or a virtuous action, to our practice and pursuit, from that peculiar beauty with which it is arrayed; and this is no doubt a very proper motive to influence the mind. But then, as in other cases, we may often reasonably resist the influence of a merely beautiful species; so it does not appear, that virtue, considered simply under the character of beautiful, produces the force of an obligation: it is therefore another modification of the moral sense that lays the foundation of this last sentiment. And, in fact, with regard to many actions at least, we feel a sense of duty pointing them out to us as what we ought to perform; and, when we act contrary to this sense, we suffer pain and remorse upon reflexion; whereas, when we comply with it, we enjoy a pleasing consciousness, and inward satisfaction of mind. That this really is the case, cannot be called in question; it is what we have an intimate feeling of, and there is no phaenomenon of the human mind that has been more universally acknowledged than the sharp remorse and painful apprehensions of a guilty conscience. And, no doubt, this reflexion of the mind, especially upon an immoral conduct, must be of the utmost importance, and give great strength to the cause of virtue. For it is a monitor and a censor, lodged within our own breasts, and attending us wherever we go. It allows us no repose, but still upbraids us with the guilt of our crimes; and,

tho' we may often banish such reflexion by a thousand amusements, yet it is hard to be obliged to fly from ourselves; and, whenever we happen to return again to deliberate thought, conscience seizes the opportunity, and is apt to disturb the tranquillity of our minds: since this is the case, every thinking man must find it his interest to sacrifice a thousand vicious pursuits, in order to secure peace with himself, and obtain the pleasing approbation of his own conscience. For surely the transient pleasures of vice, however engaging they may appear, can never countervail the lasting anguish of a self-condemning mind. But tho', from what has been said, it may be sufficiently evident, that conscience has a just and proper authority over our actions; yet, if it be confined to the notion of a mere sentiment, this doctrine may admit of considerable qualifications and limitations. For it will be allowed, that, tho' conscience is a common principle in all, yet some men have a greater delicacy, and quicker sense, in their moral feelings, than others; on which account, the influence of conscience must be proportionally unequal in different persons. But, further, some men, from bad impressions in youth, or even from a continued course of wickedness, may, in a great measure, overcome the natural checks of conscience; this principle may be, for a long time, silenced, or its admonitions little attended to, amidst the noise and bustle of criminal pursuits; and especially whilst men perceive that none of those evils come upon them, which their guilty fears are apt to suggest,

suggest, they may begin to think, that conscience is but a delusion, an empty phantom that would frighten them with imaginary dangers; and, in this manner, that principle may lose a great deal of its natural authority.

LAST of all, when conscience is considered only as a mere sentiment lodged within a man's own breast; and, having no reference to any thing else that may give it strength and support, its influence must receive the greatest diminution from this reflexion; for, whilst it is considered only as a part of a man's self, hardly will its authority be recognised by the imperious will; which undoubtedly will endeavour to subdue its influence in the same manner as it does with regard to other passions and principles of our nature. From these reflexions upon the authority of conscience, this principle, however considerable in itself, yet cannot be thought a sufficient support to virtue, so as to give it an equal, uniform, and effectual obligation. It plainly leaves the bad at more liberty than the good, and its influence must be often very irregular and uncertain. We must therefore carry our views further, and try what additional motives to virtue may arise from the nature and constitution of things.

WE have already considered it as an unquestionable principle, that happiness is the great end and object of our pursuits. Now it must be evident, from the slightest reflexion, that the happiness of man does not solely depend upon the internal frame of his own mind, but also upon the just agreement of his nature with all those

things with which he stands any manner of way connected. This observation opens up an unbounded prospect, and would lead us to inquire into the nature of all those things in which men have been apt to place their happiness, the goods of the mind, and of the body in all their various relations and degrees. Concerning these things, indeed, the judgments of mankind have been divided into a thousand different opinions, influencing their practice accordingly.

To enter into this particular detail, would be like launching out into an infinite ocean; whereas it is only intended, by a few general observations, to reduce the dispute within as narrow limits as possible.

AND, for this purpose, it may be observed, that nothing can give us a more affecting view of the general nature of things, and of our particular connexions with them, than the consideration of the source and origin from whence they are supposed to flow. According as we settle this grand point, things must appear to us in very different lights.

IF we shall suppose this universe, and all that it contains, to be the random effect of a fortuitous concurrence of atoms, there can, in this case, be no uniting principle, or governing cause; our connexions, therefore, with other beings, must be precarious, transient, and weak; in this view, we cannot reasonably consider ourselves as parts of a system, since, in reality, there can be no system at all. Upon such a supposition, it is vain to inquire after order; the apparent connexions,

xions, relations, and dependencies of things, must be fallacious, since there is no unity of design to maintain them, no end to which they can refer, nor center in which they can terminate. A world thus fluctuating at random, without an intelligent ruler, without a common and bountiful parent, presents but an uncomfortable prospect, and shoots a gloom through the human heart. We cannot now consider ourselves as members of an august community: and all the kind charities, the warm and elevated sentiments which would thence naturally arise, are utterly extinguished. Such a view damps the noble energies of the soul, and its cares about such a transitory and fortuitous life, or any thing that concerns it, must be rendered useless and vain. For life itself, (as the Emperor Antoninus justly observes) without God and providence, is not worth the possessing. Thus are the foundations of exalted sentiment, refined affection, and solid truth, overturned; and consequently virtue is not easily to be distinguished, nor much worth the seeking after. It is therefore not to be wondered at, if those, who can allow themselves to enter into this way of thinking, are at a loss to discover, or perhaps think it little worth their while to inquire after virtue. Such persons have no rational principle to unite them to a common system, and can have no view of happiness beyond the present; they must therefore bring down their standard of good to the object of some present taste or passion; and that different, according to the particular temper and inclination

clination of each. Hence that great variety of opinions concerning the supreme good. And this is also the genuine source of those miseries and disorders that distress human society. For, when men confine their views of ultimate happiness to such particular goods as will not easily admit of division or participation, this must lay a sure foundation of endless quarrels and animosities.

BUT let us now reverse the prospect, and consider this universe as a regular system, under the government of a wise and intelligent cause. Here a delightful scene opens to our view, which inspires the mind with equal sentiments of grandeur and beauty. We find all things united into an excellent system, by the most wonderful and uninterrupted harmony.

THIS view of things raises the dignity of our nature, represents us in the endearing regards of members of the same family, and makes us consider God as our common parent, the great author of all our blessedness. Hence we discover a real beauty, established in the order and nature of things, which corresponds to our moral sense, and gives it at once the greatest improvement and most exquisite delight. We may also hereby correct any irregularities or disorders in the moral sense, and adjust it to the true standard of nature.

THIS moral beauty will not simply prove an object of agreeable contemplation, it must take hold of the affections, raise them above low pursuits, and engage them with vigour and activity in
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the practice of virtue. I cannot here avoid transcribing a passage from Cicero, in his first book, *de legibus*, where, with his usual eloquence and justness of thought, he illustrates this argument from the very same topic. He represents this world as a great system, wherein all mankind are united by a common nature and interest; that this communion comprehends the Almighty God, as the supreme ruler and governor of all. And, afterwards, he expresses himself in the following manner. "He, who knows himself, will, in the first place, be sensible that he has a divine principle in his soul. He will consider his intellectual faculty as an image of the Deity consecrated within his own breast; and will ever think and act in a manner worthy of so great a gift of the gods. And when he has taken an exact survey of his own constitution, he will observe how richly nature has provided him with faculties, means, and opportunities of acquiring wisdom. For he will discover in himself the obscure principles of universal knowledge; by the due improvement of which he may become virtuous, and consequently be happy. For when the mind, from a just perception of the excellence of virtue, despises corporeal pleasures, and avoids them as its greatest reproach, subdues the fleshly appetites, and rises above the fear of pain and death; when under the direction of prudence, it acts suitably to the common tie which binds all mankind, adopts pure sentiments of religion, and maintains the worship of the gods: is it possible

“ possible to form an idea of a character more excellent and blessed than this? Such a man, when he considers this mighty universe, what is mortal and perishing in it, and what is divine and eternal; when he has, as it were, an immediate feeling of that supreme Being who governs and disposes of all things; and when he looks upon himself not as an inhabitant confined within the walls of a single town, but as a denizen of the universe as of one great city: in such an enlarged and magnificent view of things, what a sense, ye immortal gods, must he have of the dignity of his nature? How will he undervalue, and despise, and consider as empty trifles, those things which men are apt to set the highest value upon?”

THESE sentiments prove themselves to be equally natural and noble. And we shall only consider a little further what is the part we have to act in compliance and conformity with the system here represented.

THE exercise of the social affections affords a great part of the truest happiness in life. Without society all the particular pleasures of sense would prove insipid; and a man possessed of them all, if exposed on a desert island, and quite cut off from human commerce, would find his condition but extremely uncomfortable.

BENEVOLENCE is that agreeable bond which unites mankind, and the reciprocal pleasures of loving and being beloved, constitute the firm foundation of those purer joys which flow from our social intercourses.

IF we consider man, then, as a social creature, the most perfect idea we can form of the human system is, when we suppose the good of the whole, and the good of each individual to coincide: or, in other words, when the exercise of the public affections, such as lead to the good of the system, affords us greater pleasure than the indulgence of any particular passions. And till human nature is brought to this degree of perfection, 'tis evident that our happiness cannot be compleat. This, in reality, is far from being the condition of our present state. We feel, in experience, the too great violence of particular passions. Inferior objects have such an influence upon us, that we are obliged to divide the empire of our breasts betwixt the private and public affections; and the former are often too fatally prevalent and successful.

THIS being the case, if we suppose, with the Epicureans, that the soul is mortal, and that death puts an end to us at once, such an opinion must throw human nature into a deep shade, and render all the cares about it of very little consequence. It must naturally reduce our temper into a settled selfishness, as our notion of happiness must sink down to present gratification, and our generous concerns, and painful toils, for the good of others, must appear but as a piece of fruitless knight errantry. The object of virtue, upon this scheme, in a manner loses all its worth and excellence, and so does its reward too, and that in every respect.

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BUT when we reflect upon the beautiful scheme we have been considering above, human nature assumes a more amiable and engaging form; the moral excellence opens upon the mind with a brighter lustre, and gives a finer turn to the passions. Our mutual connexions appear strong and durable, and, whilst we view the pleasing extent of human society, our affections dilate themselves in an agreeable and vigorous manner, and animate us in the execution of every generous design. And, whilst the social affections thus acquire greater force and vigour, the selfish ones, on the other hand, must suffer a proportional decay. Self-government is hereby rendered more easy and agreeable, and we have a juster and more exalted relish of the pleasures of virtue.

ALTHOUGH what has been already said may appear to be of considerable weight to establish the foundation, and carry on the improvement of virtue; yet it does not seem sufficient to perfect its obligation. For whatever foundation of moral beauty there may be in the nature of man and the constitution of things, yet the perception of this beauty depends upon the faculties and taste of each particular person. Some men are capable of carrying their reflexions, upon this subject, much farther than others, and of taking both a juster and a more extensive view of moral objects. There is a difference too, in point of taste and sentiment, and all are not equally and alike affected with the beauty of a moral species. Now, if we should rest the obligation of virtue solely upon the
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the foundation of moral beauty, 'tis plain, it would be very unequal, and felt very differently by different persons. But the obligation to virtue must be equal with regard to every man, otherwise the perfect happiness of society could not be attained. For if men were no otherwise bound to the practice of virtue, but as they were influenced by their particular taste, this would absolutely contradict that idea of justice which, as we shall afterwards endeavour to shew, is necessary and essential to the happiness of society.

BUT there is another consideration which renders the obligation to virtue as hitherto considered, imperfect. For, notwithstanding the prevailing pleasures of virtue, especially upon the scheme we have had under view, it must be owned, that, in many occurrences in life, the practice of it may so interfere with other passions, nay, be attended with such difficulties, and expose us to so great dangers, that the mere influence of moral taste, may be far from being sufficient to support us against such discouragements.

It will therefore be necessary, in order to render the obligation to virtue equal and perfect, to trace the system still higher, and carry our views to the great author of it, upon whom it must entirely depend. It is taken for granted, that virtue leads to the general good; and, for that very reason, it must be agreeable to the Deity. This necessarily flows from the idea we form of the divine wisdom and goodness. In consequence of these perfections of the Deity, he must approve of that conduct, upon our part, which immediately

tends to promote so valuable an end. For it is an absurdity, and even a contradiction, to suppose God to be concerned for the end, and yet indifferent as to the means. Could we suppose that God was quite indifferent as to our moral conduct, and consequently as to that good to which it naturally leads; this would entirely destroy our idea of Providence, and annihilate the difference betwixt virtue and vice. For human reason could never pretend to establish a difference, where it was sensible the divine wisdom saw there was none at all. It must therefore be true, that God approves of virtue, and disapproves of vice; and it must be equally certain, that virtue is our duty, our wisdom and happiness, and vice the contrary. To us, then, it must appear of the utmost consequence whether God approves of our conduct, or not; for, in whatsoever object or good our supreme happiness may be supposed to be placed, God must be considered as the original author of it. Thus is the divine authority plainly interposed in behalf of virtue; an authority so much the more respectable, as it is founded on essential wisdom and goodness. Nay, this goodness is not simply directed to the perfection of the system, but may include our particular happiness. This we may readily believe from the effects of authority in many instances which we experience. We are often engaged in a course of behaviour, not from the apparent utility and agreeableness of such course, but by the near authority of a parent, guardian, or other person to whom we are placed in
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some natural subjection. Yet, when habit has reconciled us to it, we thank our superiors, whose authority has engaged us to that conduct, which, tho' our own taste and inclination would not have recommended, yet afterwards, upon reflexion, we greatly approve of as the best.

WHEN we reflect upon what is here said, we may be able to understand the meaning of natural conscience, and explain the force of the reflex approbation or disapprobation of our own conduct. The authority of conscience is justly esteemed a strong principle of morality. But, if we consider man as an independent being, it will be hard to conceive that any principle of the human mind should claim an authority over the mind itself, and bring it under the force of an obligation. In this case, the more we reflect, we will be the more apt to subject conscience, as well as any other principle or passion, to the sovereignty of the will. But, when we attend to the idea of the divine authority, we find an evident counterpart to natural conscience, something which explains its meaning, and secures to it an indisputable authority over our conduct. This reflexion is even applicable to all the different modifications of the moral sense. That sense, when calmly consulted, commonly points out our duty with abundance of clearness; yet opposite passions and unexpected difficulties are apt to defeat its influence, and frustrate its tendency. But, when we bring to its aid a sense of the divine authority, this is sufficient to remove all those obstacles, and give it its na-

tural and just effect. For, tho' the immediate satisfaction of doing well is not always a sufficient support to duty, yet the prospect of a subsequent reward must ever be considered as such.

It may perhaps be objected, that it would appear injurious to the native excellence and dignity of virtue to refer it as a means to some further end, and to support it by the prospect of a greater distant good. But it is to be observed, that it noways derogates from the immediate goodness of virtue, to consider it as a mean as well as an end: for a mean, even of itself indifferent, perhaps disagreeable, has yet a certain beauty reflected upon it from a good end to which it leads. Thus, in pursuit of some distant good, we cheerfully pass through toils and dangers, which otherwise would prove very disagreeable. Virtue, then, tho' considered as a mean of still greater good, will lose none of its immediate satisfactions; nay, it must improve them by the addition of those which are reflected upon it from the further goodness of the end to which, by the wisest constitution, it leads. And that this is really the case of virtue; and that hereby it acquires its full strength and security in the present state and condition of things, must appear from what has been said.

THUS have we endeavoured shortly to point out the nature, and delineate the obligation, of morality, not from metaphysical subtilties, but from those principles which actually take place in the human constitution. Principles which have, tho' an imperfect, yet a sensible, and even a general

neral influence, where human nature is not entirely debauched: an influence in the nature of the thing, capable of being carried to the highest improvement; and to the prevalence and improvement of which principles, the happiness of mankind even in this world, will ever bear an invariable proportion.

As from what has been said, the reason and obligation of morality must appear in the strongest light; so its most essential branches will be no less conspicuous.

EVERY individual person is a little system within himself; and we are all parts of a greater system. The perfection, then, of the general system, must depend upon the perfection and order of the parts, separately considered, and upon their fitness and tendency, to promote the general good. In consequence of this, every man must maintain order within himself, and preserve the due balance of the affections. This self-government is necessary to our immediate happiness; to the peace, composure, and constancy of our own minds.

It is also necessary to put us in a proper frame and a right posture, to pursue, with advantage, the second, and more important branch of our duty, which consists in the practice of every virtue which tends to communicate happiness to others, and to preserve the order, and promote the good of the whole.

AND, for this noble purpose, the Deity hath planted in our natures social and kind affections, the due improvement of which, upon proper and

extensive principles, must unite the private and public interest, and render the first subservient to the last. And thus, unless we be wilfully blind, we can never mistake the great lines of duty. We must be convinced, that due self-government includes self-denial, temperance, meekness, patience, equanimity, and such virtues as immediately relate to the order and rectitude of our own minds: and we must be equally satisfied, that justice, truth, goodness, fortitude, &c. are essentially necessary to maintain the order, and promote the good of the public.

THE reason for the practice of virtue arises primarily from the satisfaction and home-felt delight, which the consciousness of it immediately imparts; and this delight increases in proportion, as our affections are refined and enlarged, by more extensive views of the beauty and goodness of the system.

BUT the most compleat counterbalance to the self-affections, the strongest motive to virtue, and what renders its obligation perfect and entire, is the divine authority founded upon essential wisdom and goodness, interposed in its behalf.

THIS consideration must establish the most essential difference betwixt virtue and vice, and impress the mind of man with the strongest and most invariable sense of this difference. God is the center in which the system terminates, the author of its excellent constitution, and the guardian of its wise laws, and a just sense of this is sufficient to fix and invigorate the fluctuating and feeble sentiments, to collect the dissipated affections,

tions, and happily unite all in prosecution of the same beautiful and great design.

BUT, as we have thus endeavoured to strengthen and secure morality from a religious principle, it may be objected, first, that we have taken for granted what ought to have been proved; and, next, that it is contrary to experience; for that there may be, and, in fact, there have been eminent improvements in virtue, without any regard to religion. As this is a matter of great importance in morality, it may merit a particular examination.

WITH regard to the first objection, it is to be observed, that, in reasoning concerning morality, we must either have an express or tacit reference to one scheme or other; we must either adopt a religious system, or an atheistical one; that is none at all.

MORALITY relates to a regular course of life, directed to a certain end kept steadily in view. Now this must make it necessary for us to know something of the nature of those things on which our happiness depends, to form some opinion concerning the origin, extent, and end of our existence, and of the connexions we have with other beings. It is in this manner only, that we can ascertain some ultimate end, to which our actions may be referred; and without which it would be vain to dream of a regular conduct. We must therefore, at least tacitly, adopt one of the above contrary hypotheses. And, in such a competition, every
phenomenon

phænomenon in nature will allow us to give the preference to religion.

BUT let us, for a moment, suppose it doubtful which of the two hypotheses is the truest : as we must chuse one of them, it would be wise to prefer that of religion, for reasons too obvious to be mentioned. And it is not in the power, nor indeed in the nature of scepticism, (which implies an universal doubting), to carry the notion of Atheism beyond that of a doubt.

IF I may mention an authority here, I shall quote the words of a celebrated writer, remarkable for his freedom of thought, I mean Lord Shaftsbury. That noble author, in his *rapfody*, speaking of Atheism, says, "He who doubts, may possibly lament his own unhappiness, and wish to be convinced. He who denies is daringly presumptuous, and sets up an opinion against the interest of mankind, and being of society. 'Tis easily seen, that one of those persons may bear a due respect to the magistrate and laws, tho' not the other, who being obnoxious to them, is therefore punishable."

BUT even the subject we have been treating, naturally suggests a strong proof of the reality of religion.

FOR here is a certain fact, a remarkable phænomenon, not to be accounted for without it. The fact is a general sense in the minds of mankind, of an essential difference betwixt virtue and vice ; and that the former subjects private to public good.

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Now we have shown that this difference cannot be justly supported without religion, which alone perfectly unites public and private interest: therefore, as there is such a necessary connexion betwixt them, when we allow the one, we must also admit the other.

To proceed now to the other objection, that, in fact, there have been eminent degrees of virtue, where there has been no principle of religion at all.

It will indeed be admitted, that there may be a moral sense of right and wrong, a natural love of order and justice, and kind and benevolent affections without any principle of religion. These principles, good in themselves, may likewise have a considerable influence upon a virtuous conduct. But then, in consequence of what has been already said, they are but as the lineaments of virtue drawn upon the mind, and need the aid and intervention of religion to improve them to a just degree of perfection. This we have already shewn from reasonings, *à priori*; and these reasonings are likewise confirmed from fact and experience. Some few men are happy in their natural tempers, are placed in easy and commodious circumstances, and exempted from the principal temptations to which others are exposed: these men, by means of the natural principles above mentioned, may, in a good measure, preserve their innocence, and even distinguish themselves by such private virtues as fall in with their taste, and are suited to their particular affections.

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THIS has been the case with some very few of the Epicureans ; but, at the same time, they ever excused themselves from the practice of those more important virtues, which were attended with labour, danger and difficulty, and which crossed and disappointed those favourite enjoyments which were most agreeable to the particular temper and turn of their minds. Thus their virtue was confined to a very private sphere, and even that a variable one, if we suppose their taste might change.

BUT whatever virtue we may expect from such men as we have now been talking of, the case is very different with regard to the great bulk of mankind, even such as are in a superior rank. The passions of men are often strong and impetuous, and their various circumstances in life expose them to many violent temptations ; and, tho' they may be possessed of the natural principles of virtue, in as high a degree as those others above mentioned ; yet these, if altogether unassisted, and resting singly upon their natural strength, will prove too weak a counterbalance, and easily give way to the superior force of the antagonist passions and temptations. These virtuous principles, therefore, must be supported by the helps and improvements of reason and reflection ; and what these helps are, morality is the science that informs us.

Now morality, as a general science, must not be founded upon the case and circumstances of a few individuals, but must avail itself of such principles as are common to mankind, and affect

fect human nature in general; such as may unite and govern our sentiments and affections, and happily direct and unite them in the pursuit of one great end. The principles of religion we have shown to be such; but, if we set aside religion, we shall never be able to establish a common interest, one great end sufficient to engage our constant pursuit. In such a case, the sentiments of men must be loose and variable, and they can have nothing to govern them but their own fickle fancies. A general interest will be neglected, whilst each pursues the particular object of his taste; and when several fix upon the same indivisible object as their chief good, they must unavoidably split into factions. In consequence of this, a thousand jarring interests must disturb the peace, and infringe the order, of society. Discord, animosity, and every evil passion must prevail, and fill the world with proportional distresses. Thus it appears, that vice and misery are the natural effects of Atheism: whereas religion, by reconciling the different interests of mankind, and representing the system to us in the noblest form, may influence our virtue, so as to give it vigour and firmness in its common operations, and inspire it with new life in difficult and arduous cases, whereby it may be equal to the most heroic achievements. Thus it will appear, upon the strictest examination of things, that a religious principle is the most firm and sure support of virtue. What regard has, in fact, been paid to this principle by mankind, we
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may have occasion hereafter more particularly to consider.

It may suffice, in the mean time, to observe, that philosophers of all denominations have, in effect, given full testimony to this important truth. It can hardly be doubted, but that the great reason why the Epicureans denied the providence of God was, that they might thereby deliver themselves from a subjection to his laws and government: this appears from innumerable passages of Lucretius and other authors, who have given an account of the philosophy of that sect. Those laws they were never able to reconcile with their own passions and inclinations, but were forced to consider them as crossing their selfish views, and obliging them to the practice of virtue, and the pursuit of public happiness. Had it been in their power to have formed an idea of God, as of one like themselves, who would either approve of, or at least be indifferent about their particular passions and conduct, they would have been under no temptation to have denied a divine Providence, the denial of which reduced them to the miserable necessity of absurdly accounting for all things, from a fortuitous concurrence of atoms.

As for the theistical philosophers, tho' they do not always mention the religious principle, yet they frequently lay the greatest stress upon it. We have already seen the sense that Cicero had of this matter; and, in his treatise, *de amicitia*, he affirms, that men have access to heaven in proportion as they have been virtuous. Plato,
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the greatest of the antient moralists, is never satisfied with all he can say in support of virtue till he has set the religious principle, chiefly as it regards a future state, in the strongest point of light. This he does so copiously, almost upon every occasion, that it would be superfluous to quote any passages from him.

To conclude this argument, it were easy to show, that, upon the supposition of Atheism, philosophy and reflexion would be so far from adding strength to the primary principles of virtue, that, on the contrary, they would weaken and impair them. When a man does wrong, he has a painful feeling of the injustice, his conscience makes him uneasy, and alarms him with an apprehension of merited punishment.

THESE sentiments, with little reflexion, may prevent his doing such an injury for the future. But, if we shall, upon this Atheistical scheme, deliberately examine the nature and force of such sentiments, we may soon reason them all away, or refine them into very slender and ineffectual ideas. We must discover the apprehension of merited punishment to be chimerical, and the sense of wrong to be the mere offspring of our own minds; and therefore not of authority sufficient to make us sacrifice any favourite selfish passion to its suggestion. Thus, the more we think, the more we shall get above the influence of these natural sentiments, and leave them only or chiefly to operate upon the uninstructed vulgar: and hereby it appears, how necessary it is to fortify and adorn virtue with all that strength and dignity which

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religion

religion imparts, whereby it will be able to bear the strictest review, and even gather strength from the most accurate reflexion. And thus moral philosophy becomes a science the most important and beneficial to mankind ; but which had much better be altogether proscribed and banished from society, than suffered to raise virtue upon such principles as must sink under its weight, and lay it in ruins.

WE shall now make a very few general reflexions upon that idea of social virtue which arises from the scheme we have shortly exhibited, and from which its peculiar beauty and excellence may clearly appear.

Its object is the good of others with this qualification, that a more general and extensive good is still to be preferred to that which is more partial and confined. This good is pursued intentionally ; that is, it is the deliberate aim and design of the mind to produce it ; and, for this purpose, it employs its intelligent faculties to discover wherein it consists, and by what means it is to be accomplished. It is indeed very possible, that the judgment may sometimes err ; but, where the intention of good is strong and sincere, such mistakes will be at once less frequent and dangerous ; and where error is invincible, they will be considered rather as human frailties, than vices. Thus is virtue a living, active, intelligent, and designing principle and source of good ; and, by these characters, it will be eminently distinguished from other qualities or things, however good or useful they may be, according to their particular nature.

VIRTUE

VIRTUE indeed meets with difficulties in its way, and strong opposition from private passions ; yet it exerts itself to subdue those, in order to secure the superior object it has in view. Virtue has ever been represented as the empire of the mind over the passions and affections, giving laws and a particular direction to them. It has been distinguished as an active principle, pushing its way through dangers and difficulties, whilst the prospect of a suitable reward at last, renders the toil lovely and agreeable. The gods, says Hesiod, have placed sweat, labour and difficulties across our way to virtue : its path is strait and steep, but it opens by degrees ; and when we gain the summit, we reap joy and delight. This sentiment is invariably adopted, and expressed in many beautiful allegories by philosophers in all ages. And what else can be the meaning of all the precepts of morality ! They teach us how to govern our passions, to exert ourselves vigorously in prosecution of what is right and good, at the expence of our most favourite enjoyments, and whatever pain and trouble it may cost us in the mean time.

AND perhaps that beauty, that splendor and dignity of virtue, which is so much talked of, and so agreeably felt, arises, in a great measure, from viewing it in this light, as pursuing public good preferably to present gratification ; and this admirable part of the constitution cannot be complied with unless vigorous efforts are exerted against the immediate incitements of appetite and passion.

WE have considered good intention as an essential characteristic of virtue, rather than benevolence; because the former implies a deliberate design and fixed resolution to do good, which will naturally lead the mind carefully to consider all the just and proper methods of pursuing its object; whereby it must prove a regular and universal principle.

BUT benevolence, considered as the immediate impulse of a particular affection, tho' some philosophers seem to have regarded it as the chief, if not the sole source of virtue; yet, in reality, appears to be a principle too weak and irregular for this purpose.

WE have already observed the insufficiency of the moral sense in itself for the improvement of virtue. In every case, it is in danger of being supplanted by stronger instincts and passions of a different tendency. And, in complex cases, it often forsakes us, even when there is no such competition, and leaves us at a loss what we should do. In either case, therefore, reason and reflexion must support the moral sense; for, without such assistance, 'tis evident, that our virtue must be precarious and imperfect. Benevolence is in no better condition than the moral sense with regard to its immediate operations; when unsupported by wisdom and reflexion; it is but as a wandering fire, and will often lead us into wrong and immoral conduct, even in the most important characters of life.

IN a parent, it may become an excessive fondness, than which nothing is more apt to be hurtful

ful to a child: in a judge, it may overlook the right of a stranger, too far removed from its influence, and make way for partial preference: in a ruler, it may relax the vigour of government, and weaken that authority which is necessary to maintain the peace, and promote the happiness, of society. The dispassionate temper, proper to one in such a public character, is thus elegantly expressed by Callistratus the Roman lawyer; *in cognoscendo neque excandescere adversus eos quos malos putat, neque precibus calamitosorum inlacrymari oportet.* 'Tis needless to mention more instances, as it is obviously easy to push such reflexions through every part of life.

AND thus it may appear, that a blind unguided benevolence may frequently be the source of vice: it is therefore essential to the nature of virtue, that the intellectual faculty should examine the system, and so arrange and adjust the several objects of our various affections, that these may operate in a due proportion, and with such an agreeable harmony as, upon the whole, to produce that regular conduct which deserves the character of virtuous; and to which every particular affection contributes as well as benevolence. Nay, it is thus that even benevolence itself acquires its chief excellence, and is improved into that calm and regular good temper, which Mr. Hutcheson himself allows to be the justest source of virtue. And, tho' this reflex benevolence (which is much the same with what we have called good intention) may not always be so strong as the primary

impulse of that affection; yet it makes a sufficient amends by its constancy, firmness and regularity. It must therefore appear, that the affections, as well as other qualities and enduements of the mind, are good or bad according to the end to which they are directed. If that be bad, they are vicious and wrong.

BENEVOLENCE degenerates into weakness and partiality; fortitude into cruelty and oppression; and prudence into cunning and deceit. These qualities and dispositions, therefore, when exerted in real life, derive all their excellence from virtue and good intention. 'Tis this noble principle which, as the sun to the material, imparts light, beauty and form to the moral world.

HAVING made the foregoing observations upon the nature and distinguishing properties of virtue, it must be owned, that we have only hinted at these things, yet so as that it may be easy to improve them by further reflexions.

OUR design was not to enlarge upon a system, but only to mark out the principles upon which morality is founded, both in regard to its nature and obligation: and 'tis hoped, (especially as there may be afterwards occasion for particular illustrations), that this is sufficiently done to serve the purpose in view; that is, to examine, with more ease and perspicuity, some of the most material matters contained in a late book, entitled, *An inquiry concerning the principles of morals.*

BUT, before we proceed to that design, we shall shortly consider a general objection that may be made against the foregoing scheme.

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It may be said that virtue has been represented as a system of conduct so extensive and complex; and where there appears so great difficulty in reducing the several impetuous passions and affections into a conformity with such system, that the prospect of this must give equal discouragement in engaging in it, as difficulty in execution.

It must indeed appear, from what has been said, that there is abundance of difficulty in the prosecution of virtue; that is a fact confirmed by experience, and generally admitted: 'tis strongly expressed by Persius:

Et premittitur ratione animus, vincique laborat;

importing, that the mind must put forth all its strength to subdue the passions; and the victory costs a hard struggle. However, the principles which have been laid down, and these alone appear sufficient to animate us to encounter, and to enable us, in a good measure, to overcome the difficulties in our way; and they have this advantage that they are calculated to influence, not only the more speculative and thinking part of mankind, but even to strike the vulgar, and break the force of their partial passions: and, in proportion as we suppose passion subdued, the moral sense will regain its ascendant: for, tho' that principle be weak, yet it appears to be abundantly just, where passion is set aside. Thus, when we reflect upon the conduct of others; when we rejudge our own past conduct, or calmly consider what course of behaviour is most agreeable to the Deity; in such dispassionate cases,

ses, the moral sense is abundantly faithful to its charge. When, therefore, the obstacles that obstruct it are removed, when the interposing clouds of passion are dissipated by the force of superior principles; its gentle light will agreeably break in upon us, and clear up the course we should steer. And, further, as it is a general principle planted in human nature, its influence will be general, and equally affect all conditions of men.

FROM these considerations, therefore, it will clearly appear, that mankind, in general, may make considerable progress in virtue; and, tho' our improvements therein must be very imperfect in this present state; yet, if we are firm, constant, and sincere in our pursuits of it, this is all we can do, and all that will be expected: if, therefore, we shall acquit ourselves in this manner, we may entertain the agreeable hope of arriving at greater perfection, in a happier state, hereafter.

S E C T.

S E C T. II.

Of JUSTICE.

THE author, whom we have just mentioned, discovers a strength of genius, a fertility of invention, and an acuteness of reasoning, indeed in an eminent degree. And, in certain views which he has given us of morality, he seems to have applied these excellent talents with abundance of success. It would have been extremely agreeable, could we have added, with good reason, that he has preserved a constancy in his opinions, and discovered that concern, to clear up, and distinguish truth, which he seems to have employed to perplex it; and thereby to confound all moral distinctions. If this last insinuation be just, it is at least humane to ascribe such conduct to the most innocent causes the nature of the thing will admit of.

It will, however, be necessary to use all that freedom which a regard to the most important truth demands, in prosecution of our present design, which is to examine some of those extraordinary doctrines regarding morality, which this author has endeavoured to establish.

WHAT he says, for the most part, with abundance of clearness and precision, concerning benevolence, will need no review; but his peculiar
notions

notions concerning justice may demand some attention.

It is not our design to treat of justice in a formal systematic manner, but only to consider what our author has advanced concerning the merit and obligation of that virtue, and to make such general observations as may tend to detect the fallacy of his reasoning, and demonstrate in what respects he has mistaken, and fallen short of the truth.

In general, he assigns a sense of public utility or common interest as the sole origin of justice. This, at first sight, has indeed a specious appearance; but it might have needed some explication, which he has yet thought fit not to give.

A sense of common interest is a compound principle including two things of a very different nature; the first is, a regard to our own interest; and the other is, a regard to the interest of those with whom we live in society.

If these principles are justly united in equal proportions, such a happy composition will indeed prove a very natural and proper source of justice. But, if a regard to our own interest should prevail, and gain the ascendant over our conduct, this must prove the certain source of injustice, and every disorder imaginable. Our author has led us to no higher principle, which might happily unite these two very different ingredients; on the contrary, in the course of his reasoning, he seems to have lost sight of the interest of others and to have reduced the rule of justice to the standard of self-interest alone.

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THIS will evidently appear, when we take a general view of the arguments which he has multiplied upon this subject; and, in following the order which he has observed, we may have occasion to make some further remarks upon his sentiments and opinions.

IF, with our author, we suppose such a natural profusion of the necessaries and comforts of life, as that they may be a ready and easy purchase to every body; or, if we suppose such a warm benevolence in the human heart, as to make men chearfully divide, and communicate to others what good things they possess; in such cases, the operations of justice will be reduced to a narrower sphere, but its nature will still remain the same, and it will be equally injurious to take away, either by fraud or force, what belongs to another.

IN the first case, the operations of benevolence must evidently be also limited; but it will not from thence follow, that benevolence is not an original affection in the human breast, having for its immediate object the good of others independent of the view of its useful consequences: this our author admits, and has indeed clearly proved. Justice, therefore, in the same manner, may have an original sentiment as its first monitor and spring, without attending to its public utility, which requires some experience and reflection.

BUT, if we shall reverse the foregoing cases into their opposite extremes, we shall find the objects of justice thereby varied, rather than its nature.

nature. Suppose the case of extreme want, of war, or of violent and unjust society.

IN the first case, no doubt a person in extreme want, may lawfully take from another, without his consent, such of the necessities of life as he may spare; and that in order to self-preservation. But this will not prove a change in the nature of justice, but rather an enlargement of an antecedent obligation. Every man is bound to supply the wants of the poor according to his abilities: this obligation is, however, imperfect, so long as the poor can make a hard shift to provide for themselves; but, in case they cannot, the obligation becomes perfect; and, if not complied with, a poor man may take what belongs to another, in order to preserve his life, without being unjust.

IF a man is in a state of war with others, or unhappily engaged in a company of ruffians, he may lawfully seize from either what arms are necessary for his defence. There is really no alteration of justice here, but a change of the relations and regards of persons, from which different duties must respectively arise. Thus I owe love and kind offices to a friend; but, if that friend unjustly becomes my enemy, I may lawfully kill him, if I cannot otherwise preserve my own life.

WE have touched the foregoing matters but slightly, in regard they do not appear to throw much light upon the subject. We shall now proceed to some other arguments insisted on by our author, whereby he discovers his sentiments with
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more plainness and perspicuity; and regulates justice (as has been hinted) by self-interest alone.

He supposes a species of rational creatures intermingled with men, yet of such inferior strength of body and mind, as that men had little to apprehend from their resentment. We would, says he, lie under no obligations of justice to such creatures; and we might, at pleasure, seize from them any thing they possessed, without incurring the censure of being unjust: and he adds, as the reason of his assertion, that no inconveniency can result from the exercise of this power; and that, in such a case, the restraints of justice and property are totally useless. He applies this doctrine to the case of the Spaniards; and sufficiently intimates, that these might lawfully invade and despoil the barbarous Indians, because the superiority of their power rendered those Indians very little the objects of their fear; and, therefore, in consequence of his foregoing opinion, the restraints of justice were useless, and to be laid aside. He proceeds to mention the female sex; and his argument leads us to consider them in the same light. Their inferiority of strength must cut them off from any claim of right, and subject them to the capricious humours of their lordly masters. This, he observes, is the case in many nations, tho', at the same time, he indeed allows, that the females, by means of their insinuation, address, and charms, may, for the most part, secure to themselves the rights and privileges of society. Thus the rights of the one sex are solely founded upon the external ornaments

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and graces of their persons and behaviour; and consequently they must be as fluctuating and precarious, as we may suppose these to be, or as is the taste and fancy of their arbitrary lords. They must submit to every injury and violation without complaint of injustice, since their only title fails them, in regard it has no influence to restrain their more powerful invaders, whose taste, good or bad, is hereby rendered the sovereign law.

I shall not, at present, contest the truth of these opinions, but must observe, that, from this idea of justice given us by our author, 'tis clear as sun-shine, that he derives it, not from a right view of public utility, but from mere self-interest. According to these reasonings, we must observe justice with regard to those who may be in a condition to hurt us, if we should neglect it; but, so soon as a superiority of power raises us above such fear, we are then no longer bound by any ties of justice; we may treat our inferiors as we please, and innocently break through all restraints of this kind.

Our author next proceeds to figure certain imaginary cases, where, for want of proper objects, there appears to be no room for the exercise of justice; and therefore these cases seem not to merit any particular consideration.

In the second part of his essay on this subject, he endeavours to shew, by a variety of observations, that the rules of justice and property were devised, as being useful to the public, and tending to promote the interest of society. The usefulness of those rules I believe no body ever did dispute: but, superseding

feeding at present a proper inquiry into the nature of justice, we may only observe, that all the particular instances here brought together by our author, will not prove that a sense of public utility was the real and proper motive for establishing the rules of justice, because these may be as readily accounted for, from the motive of self-interest, and that in an entire consistency with his former opinions. For, if we suppose men, living in a state of society, without any natural principles of justice, it will yet be their interest, even the interest of each individual, to agree upon certain rules of conduct with regard to one another : for otherwise the society would be in a state of disquiet, disorder and distress, which each member would immediately feel for himself. To prevent, therefore, this unhappy condition, which must affect each individual, it must appear the interest of every single member of the society, to concur in framing certain laws and regulations, by which a general order may be established, and their intercourses with one another rendered more beneficial and secure. And thus private interest, according to our author's reasonings, must be considered as the immediate source of justice, and not a real sense of public utility ; which is an object more remote, and less affecting. That this is our author's meaning, appears evident, without the least ambiguity, from what has been already said ; but it will receive additional confirmation, if we consider some further observations made by him upon this subject.

IN the first paragraph of his fourth section, what in the end of that paragraph he calls the advantage of the public, he represents in the beginning of it, as the strong interest of each individual. He proceeds to observe, that different nations are under no such necessity to practise the rules of justice towards one another, as individual members of the same society are. And his reason for this assertion seems plainly to be, because acts of injustice taking place amongst members of the same state, who are immediately connected together, must unavoidably produce disorder and confusion, and tend to intestine war. Whereas the effects of injustice, committed by one state against another, are not so sensibly felt by the first, because there is not such an immediate intercourse and connexion betwixt them. And therefore he allows, that reasons of state (that is, private interest) may dispense with the rules of justice, and invalidate a treaty or alliance. From these positions, it is evident, that the interest of one of the contracting parties is made the measure of justice, and not the common interest, or the interest of both. For if the joint interest of both parties is made the measure of justice, no particular interest of one of them can justify the breach of a treaty: this cannot be done upon the footing of common interest, till it becomes the interest of the other party likewise; in which case the treaty will be abandoned by mutual consent. We shall just add one observation more upon this subject. Our author affirms, that robbers and pirates could not maintain their confederacies, without the observance of justice

stice amongst themselves. This is indeed true ; but surely it can never be supposed, that they act from a proper sense of public utility, as it particularly includes the interest of their associates ; it is undoubtedly their private interest that binds them together, and it would be most absurd to assign as the motive of their confederacy a sentiment, which it is the design of that confederacy to counteract with regard to all other men. And when it may be added, that so soon as their association is at an end, they are commonly as apt to take undue advantages of one another, as ever they were to do with regard to strangers.

THUS it appears, from the whole of our author's reasonings, as well as from his direct assertions and inferences, that he deduces his idea of justice solely from the private source of immediate self-interest ; this narrow principle is made its alone measure and standard. Upon this partial scheme, the right of my neighbour is nothing fixed in itself, but ever shifting according to the several variations of my private interest. Thus Nero, in a private station, must at least pay certain regards to the rights of others, in order to avoid the censure of the law, or the resentments of his fellow-citizens ; but when absolute power had raised him above both, he might do what mischief a depraved spirit could prompt him to, without imputation of injustice. Nay, a highwayman, a traitor, an assassin, act in these characters from a motive of self-interest ; and therefore, if justice has no other source but this motive, they have an equal title to that virtue, with an honest tradesman, a

firm patriot, and a generous friend. Thus the distinctions betwixt justice and injustice are absolutely set aside, and self-interest is made the only standard of moral conduct.

THESE consequences are so shocking and absurd, that our author fairly deserts them, and, in his fifth section, supposes public utility, as it especially signifies a disinterested regard to the good of others, to be the proper source of justice.

THIS has indeed a more promising appearance; but then it flatly contradicts his former theory, and is utterly inconsistent with it. We are, however, very willing to set that aside, and shall proceed to consider separately, what form, what aid and support justice receives from the new principles, which in this place he thinks fit to adopt, or rather to suppose.

HE considers human nature in every separate point of light, and thence demonstrates, that there is wrought into the human frame a principle of benevolence, which leads to the good of others as an agreeable object: by means of this principle, we enter into the concerns of those of our own species, and a tender sympathy with them mixes itself with all our affections. This principle of humanity is certainly real, and will readily be admitted; but then it can by no means distinguish the particular nature of justice. That justice differs, in its form, from general benevolence, is universally allowed; and our author supposes it, when he treats them separately. When he resolves justice, then, into a regard to the good of others, what idea does he call up into our minds, besides

besides that of common benevolence? None, certainly. Does he mean that justice regards the good of many jointly considered, but benevolence has for its object only one individual? This is apparently neither true of justice nor benevolence.

LET us try how this matter may be cleared up, by considering a particular example. If I give a sum of money, which I owe to an opulent creditor, to relieve the straits of an indigent person, but am, by this donation, disabled to pay my debt; this conduct is quite conformable to the views of benevolence, but contrary to the obligation of justice. It is surely a greater act of kindness, to relieve the necessities of an indigent person, than to increase the stores of one in affluence. Benevolence is interested in the first, but pretty indifferent to the last. Perhaps it may be said, that this conduct, though it immediately touches our benevolence, yet, attending to its consequences, we discover it not to be good upon the whole; and that it is really a more rational benevolence to pay the debt. Should this be allowed, yet it is evident, that it turns benevolence off from an original sentiment, and exhibits it as the result of a deliberate reflexion upon a train of consequences. Now this will not well tally with our author's speculations, which are all employed about the original and immediate force and influence of humanity. But again, whence is it that, in the case supposed, there should appear greater good upon the whole in payment of the debt? This can never be true, unless we suppose some particular reason why the creditor should be preferred.

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That reason cannot be derived from the general sentiment of humanity, which would plainly lead to a different conduct. It must then be resolved into a more particular sentiment, which establishes some natural claim in favours of the creditor; and which suggests to us an idea of his having good cause to expect a preference, and to complain of wrong if he is disappointed. Now, complaints of this kind, so natural and just, must evidently tend to the disturbance of society; they must occasion animosities, excite quarrels, and when they prevail, introduce general disorder.

THUS the idea of just and right is evidently antecedent to the idea of common utility: this last is a consequence, and not the source of the first.

SUCH is the original frame of our constitution, that we have a natural sense of right and wrong, a feeling and perception of just and unjust. The idea of good or useful, must then relate to our original constitution, and import something that is agreeable to that. It is indeed useful to observe the rules and measures of justice: but why is it so? because we have a sense of justice planted in our nature, and to counteract this must give us pain; whereas, to comply with it, must gratify an essential and agreeable part of our constitution. It might be easy to illustrate this theory by many more particular examples; but the observations already made, appear sufficient to discover at once the weakness and inconsistency of our author's scheme. We shall just recapitulate it.

HE sets out in a specious manner, with the idea of public utility, in order thence to trace the

the source and origin of justice. But he would mislead us by dividing this complex idea; he lays hold of that part of it which regards ourselves only, and thereby resolves justice into mere self-interest, a principle the most improper for that purpose; because, in its immediate nature, it leads us to claim too much to ourselves, and to invade the rights of others; and, for this reason, it is truly the genuine source of all the disorders and irregularities that prevail in the world.

OUR author appears sensible of the absurdity of this part of his scheme; he tacitly abandons it, and supposes justice to be deduceable from a common principle of humanity. But this principle, however excellent in itself, is yet not sufficient for this purpose; because thereby justice and benevolence are not distinguished, which, in their natures, are, however, very different. The general sentiment of benevolence can never constitute the particular form of justice, nor secure its obligation; because benevolence does not necessarily interfere with private interest; but justice often does. We are not obliged to perform acts of liberality, that may too much exhaust our private patrimony; but such acts of justice we sometimes must perform. Mere kindness does not require us to expose our lives to danger, to deliver another person from the same danger; but justice, in many cases, undoubtedly does this. Our author's scheme is therefore, in every view of it, altogether ineffectual, we are still left in the dark with regard to the particular nature and obligation of justice. He has omitted

omitted what is most essential in this matter, to unfold those principles which may reconcile justice and private interest, and prevent the opposition which this last is ever ready to make to the former.

OUR author himself is afterwards abundantly sensible of the weakness of his scheme, when he considers the nature of the obligation of justice; and finds it difficult to support it in opposition to the influence of private interest. In this crisis, his principles utterly forsake him, and leave him destitute of all resource. Indeed he insinuates that the heart of man will rebel, and an antipathy rise in his nature in opposition to all base and unjust motives. This may be true, but not upon his scheme; for it does not afford the slightest foundation for such antipathy: it must therefore arise from nobler principles established in the nature of man, and in the constitution to which he relates, but such as our author has not at all thought fit to investigate and explain.

IN order, therefore, still more fully to expose the weakness and fallacy of our author's scheme, we shall now proceed very shortly to delineate the general nature of justice, and to point out the principles which do most effectually secure its obligation.

IN prosecuting this design, we shall not perplex the subject with the supposition of imaginary cases, but shall consider man just as nature has made him; for it is only from such a view, that the true idea of human justice can properly arise. Such, then, is the nature and condition of man,
that

that he stands in need of many external things to preserve his being, and to procure any sort of a comfortable subsistence in the world. He stands in need of these things, and of many more, to gratify those enlarged desires and capacities with which he is endued; and thereby to increase the real comfort and happiness of life. For these purposes, Providence has richly stored this earth with a variety of objects, intended, not only for necessity and use, but calculated to gratify all that variety of taste in the human heart which naturally corresponds to them.

THUS is man evidently dependent upon external things, both for his subsistence and happiness in this world.

HOWEVER, all these things, tho' necessary, are yet not sufficient to make man happy.

IF we should suppose a man to have every thing of this kind laid to his hand, by the immediate bounty of Providence, and yet be cut off from all human society and commerce, it is self-evident that such a single solitary being must be extremely unhappy.

OUR constitution is plainly social, and our hearts are fashioned alike. We are formed for conversation, and the reciprocal intercourse of benevolent and kind affections; and, in these mental exercises, the purest and most exalted happiness, we are capable of, consists.

As this social make of man, with all its happy effects, will readily be admitted: instead of enlarging upon the proof of it, we shall make the following observation.

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THAT nature has compleatly provided and prepared the necessaries of life for most other animals, but man can procure none of them in any tolerable degree, without mutual assistance, and such art and industry as must employ a great many hands.

THIS appears to be a wise constitution of Providence; for hereby men are determined to cultivate society, and those connexions are rendered necessary to our subsistence; from the due improvement of which, pleasures of a nobler kind immediately arise.

BUT, in order to render society safe and agreeable, every man must be secured in the possession of those things which belong to him as an individual, which are necessary to his subsistence, and correspond to his natural wants and desires. Our life and members, our liberty, our character and reputation, and even those external things which we possess as necessary to supply our natural wants and exigencies, must all be rendered safe and secure to us, otherwise we must be in a state of continual uneasiness and apprehension, with regard to those things which we naturally set the justest value upon. Nature has made such things our own, has given us a right to them, or has formed us in such a manner, that, without them, we cannot be happy. It is therefore self-evident, that a society must be miserable, the members of which have no security against the unjust invasions of one another. Mutual attacks upon such rights as nature has appropriated to each, or eternal jealousies and apprehensions

hensions of such attacks, must render a social state the most painful and disagreeable thing that can be ; and consequently must naturally tend to its dissolution.

ON the other hand, let us suppose men influenced by such a principle as can distinguish the natural goods of one another, and lead them to consider them as not to be invaded upon any pretence whatever ; such a principle as will determine them to act in this regard towards others, in the same manner they would reasonably expect from these in the like circumstances. It is as evident, that a society strengthened and united by such a firm and equal tie as we have supposed, must be in the most secure and agreeable state imaginable. In this case, every man will be considered as a guard upon the right and property of another ; a mutual confidence will happily take place, founded upon the inward integrity of the heart, to the exclusion of all sinister, partial, or irregular motives.

WHEN society is formed upon such a noble plan as this ; when the tie that binds it reaches the heart, and secures the determined purpose of the mind, how pleasing and agreeable must our social intercourse be ? upon what friendly terms must we converse ? with what an easy and delightful stream of joy must our affections mutually flow, when we consider the rights of one another as sacred, and not to be violated upon any suggestion or enticement of whatever particular interest or passion ? Justice is that virtue which produces all these noble effects ; it is that internal tie

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which so happily establishes the social union, and opens the springs of so many blessings to mankind.

ON the other hand, injustice not only deprives us of those inestimable blessings, but introduces all the contrary mischiefs: where that generally prevails, men can never be secure in the possession of any natural good; all confidence and trust must be banished; a just dislike of society will make us shrink into a sullen selfishness; and violence or fraud will fill the world with the utmost distress.

HAVING given this general idea of justice, we shall consider a little farther the nature of rights, which are the objects of it.

THOSE rights which are purely personal, which regard our life, liberty, or reputation, are intimately founded in nature. He, who wantonly attacks any of these, does us a wrong or injury which we are deeply sensible of; and it is evident that we cannot live in any agreeable state of society with such a person: there is, therefore, very little difficulty with regard to such rights, they are so strongly founded in nature.

NEXT to these are the rights arising from families, founded upon covenant, and strengthened and enlarged by the natural tie of common children.

WE shall, therefore, chiefly consider our right to such external things as are the common subjects of property.

OUR connexion, indeed, with such things, is not so strong and intimate as with those others already
already

already mentioned, which are more immediately our own; yet, since those external things are necessary to our subsistence, to the comfort and happiness of our lives; if there was no natural method of making them our own, they must remain the subjects of eternal dispute; and consequently prove an invincible obstacle to society. But there is, in reality, no such defect in the constitution as this must appear; for nature furnishes us with methods of appropriating such things in a manner abundantly sensible. The ideas of thine and mine are clear, and common to all mankind. What things we acquire by our own industry, or lawfully receive from others, are justly accounted our own property: we certainly have a nearer connexion with such things, than any other person has. If others, therefore, should seize them, as things in common, we will have a strong natural sense of injury done us; and it is too plain to need any demonstration, that this conduct must produce such confusion and disorder as is inconsistent with the nature of society. Perhaps some of the methods of acquiring property, as they are enumerated by civilians, may be liable to dispute; but our nature has furnished us with a remedy which may, in a great measure, obviate the inconveniencies which this might occasion.

WE are endued with the noble faculty of speech, and can, by means of words, clearly convey our sentiments to one another. Hereby we are enabled to enter into mutual engagements, and we naturally trust one another with the per-

formance of them : hence trust, and fidelity which corresponds to it, are plainly natural, and a breach of trust ever affects us with a strong sense of injury.

THUS is fidelity an essential bond of society, a natural foundation of private contracts, and more general conventions. And, by means of these, any difficulties or doubts which may arise concerning the natural constitution of property, may be easily adjusted and removed. It is true, that conventions or laws, when applied to particular cases, may be liable to doubt and uncertainty ; and may therefore be explained by remote analogies ; and often, perhaps, in a pretty arbitrary manner. But the inconveniencies arising from hence may be easily removed, by subsequent conventions ; especially when we suppose a real principle of justice established in the heart.

FROM these few reflexions upon the nature of right, it is evident, that it must regulate the conduct of one man towards another, and that a regard to it is the essential bond of union, in larger associations of men. It is also evidently founded in the nature and constitution of man ; and must therefore be the soul and spirit which animates civil laws, and no arbitrary effect created by them : for, if we should suppose that the civil laws of any country did permit the assaulting of our persons, the corrupting of our wives and children, the forcing from us such goods as were the product of our industry, or we were otherwise in the unblameable possession of ; if they should countenance perjury, infidelity,

fidelity, and fraud of every kind ; and, if the general manners and practice of the people should be conformable to such laws, what would be the consequence of this ? Such an unnatural society would immediately break up ; men would rather go to the desert, and trust themselves with wild beasts, than live among their own species, when thus so entirely divested of humanity.

It may, however, be proper here to observe, that natural justice is not the sole object of civil law, a thousand other particular advantages are thereby intended to be secured, and these often arise from accidental and changeable circumstances, and are accordingly liable to variations. Nay, even when it is the design of civil law to secure the performance of natural justice, it does not attempt to do so in a direct manner, as it cannot immediately reach the heart ; but it pursues this end by means of external sanctions suited to the genius and circumstances of the people, whereby the practice of justice is rendered safe and beneficial, and the violation of it dangerous and hurtful.

It may, however, happen, in the case of a general corruption of manners, that the just execution of law will be neglected, or its remedies prove ineffectual to stem the torrent of vice. In such a case, it will sensibly appear what wretched substitutes the best political institutions are, where inward integrity and native virtue are wanting at the heart.

*Quid leges sine moribus
Vanæ proficiunt ?*

WHAT an infinite difference, then, must there be betwixt that nominal justice which is the mere effect of civil law, and can only regulate those actions which fall under the view of others ; and that real justice which penetrates the heart, which forms the genuine character, and purifies the secret and internal springs of action.

WE shall still have a clearer idea of the nature of justice, when we consider the rule which governs it, and the motives and obligations by which the practice of it is enforced.

THE rule of justice is deducible from the natural equality of mankind. Men have a common nature, and are to be considered as on an equal footing. They equally value life, and need those supplies that are necessary to support it. Health, liberty, reputation, and other natural good things are equally desired and sought after ; and their opposites are in the same manner avoided. The plain and natural rule of justice, therefore, must be, that we ought to treat others in the same manner as we would reasonably desire or expect that they should treat us : or, to consider the same principle in another light, men should behave towards one another in such manner as they would imagine a spectator, who had an equal and impartial regard to all, would approve of.

IT is indeed true, that there are certain differences betwixt one man and another ; yet these are not of that kind as should in the least infringe the forementioned equal rule of justice. One man may be wiser or stronger than another, but all men have, or must be supposed to have, an equal regard and affection to the natural goods they possess. If one man, therefore, from superior force or cunning, should deprive another of his natural right, that other would watch every opportunity to do justice to himself, and a change in the circumstances of the persons, or a thousand accidents might readily furnish him with one. If such conduct was then to be allowed, it is evident, that it must take away all trust from among men, render every right entirely precarious, and tend to the separation of one man from another, as well as to the dissolution of larger associations.

JUSTICE is that common bond which unites mankind, which secures that social intercourse upon which all our other blessings depend. Justice must therefore claim a superior regard, and all our more particular attachments must give place to it. Justice changes the situation in which self-love is apt to place us, and makes us look upon others in the same light as we regard ourselves. It also suspends the affection we bear to our friends ; for justice must certainly claim the preference to friendship ; and, for the very same reason, to the love of our country. Justice is the cause of human nature ; we must first pay the debt due to man as such, and we shall still find

find room enough to distinguish our particular regards to our friends, and our country. Upon these we may chiefly bestow our love and affection, we may do numberless kind offices, and perform signal services to them, where justice will not in the least interfere.

FROM all that has been said it must appear, that justice is a virtue which regards all mankind with an equal and impartial eye, and is unalterably fixed upon an invariable foundation, so long as the natural wants and desires of mankind, and those objects, which correspond to them, continue as they are, and ever have been. Altho' considerable motives to the practice of justice, must arise from the observations already made upon that virtue, yet this is a matter of such consequence, as to require a more particular examination.

THE universal practice of justice, no doubt, tends to the general interest of mankind, and must upon the whole produce the greatest good. But then it is to be observed, that the good of the whole is not the proper good of each individual.

It is true, every man has, or may have a share in the general good, but then that is but small, at least in comparison of the whole. It may indeed receive some addition from the principle of humanity, which recommends a general good to our particular approbation. However, notwithstanding the joint influence of these motives, it is no difficult matter to suppose particular interests, and selfish passions of a superior strength, and which will, for that reason, lead us to acts of injustice.

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For it is the greatest moment of interest or happiness, that will influence our actions. As therefore the temptations to injustice may be strong from the concurrence of many particular passions, especially if we imagine that it may be committed so secretly as to escape the observation of mankind, whereby the ill effects of human vengeance may be avoided. It is, for this reason, necessary to support justice from such considerations as will satisfy us, that it is our wisdom ever to observe it, as tending, upon the whole, to promote our truest interest. For, unless this can be done, our obligation to justice must remain imperfect, and consequently the practice of it can never, upon reasonable principles, be fully depended on. And, if such a conclusion as this be admitted, it must have an unhappy influence upon society, and render the perfection of it a thing impracticable.

OUR understanding enables us to examine the nature of society, and to consider all those mutual regards which are necessary to the support of it, as also what conduct, on the other hand, has a tendency to its subversion.

BUT the perceptions we have of these things, are not calm, unaffecting, and purely speculative. The author of our nature has wisely accompanied them with certain warm and lively sentiments, calculated to influence our practice. Hence philosophers have derived the idea of a moral sense. This moral sense evidently recommends justice to us, as an agreeable object ; nay, it leads us to the practice of justice, not only under the character of beautiful, it represents it also in the light of duty
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and obligation. This is the source of that secret satisfaction which attends an upright conduct. Hence also that painful remorse which we feel, when we are conscious of an action manifestly unjust. The apprehensions of guilt, in such a case, are ever considered as natural; and Juvenal describes them in the following strong manner :

*Evasisse putes, quos diri conscia facti
Mens habet attonitos.*——

*Hi sunt qui trepidant, et ad omnia fulgura pallent
Cum tonat, exanimes primo quoque murmure cæli.*

BUT, as we have already considered the nature and force of the moral sense, and in what respect it is in itself an imperfect principle of virtue, it is unnecessary here to repeat what has been said to that purpose.

IT may be worth while however to consider the moral sense a little further, in so far as it attends and enlightens our reflexions upon justice, and is itself corrected by these; and hereby we may still obtain clearer discoveries of the nature of that virtue.

THE moral sense then is an immediate monitor and prompter to our duty, and supplies the place of slower reasoning and reflexion. At the same time, it is not so sure a guide, at least in complex cases, in these it will need the assistance of reflexion, to rectify its mistakes, and govern its influence. The intellectual faculty must place the proper object before the moral sense, in its compleat natural proportions, and then the report of that sense will be abundantly faithful and just, which
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it cannot be expected, will be the case, if the object is misplaced, or imperfectly represented.

It may be proper to illustrate what is above hinted, by a particular example.

DARIUS HYSTASPIS made an expedition against the Scythians, and, in order to secure his retreat, he laid a bridge over the Danube, and gave the command of it to certain Greek officers in whom as being in possession of large governments under him, he reposed a particular confidence. Of these commanders the famous Miltiades happened to be one. Darius met with bad success in his expedition, whereupon Miltiades proposed to destroy the bridge, which would occasion the ruin of the king and his army, and it would then be in their power to restore freedom and security to the Grecian states. This council was rejected, and Miltiades made his escape.

CORNELIUS NEPOS, who narrates this fact, greatly applauds the purpose of Miltiades, because he preferred the liberty of his countrymen to his own particular interest.

BUT this Roman writer appears to have been too much preoccupied with a favourite object, the love of his country: for if we take a just and extensive view of the whole circumstances of the case, we must highly condemn the proposal of Miltiades, as contrary to gratitude, fidelity, and allegiance, the strongest ties which can bind human nature. The common rights of mankind must undoubtedly claim a preference to every particular attachment, the love of our country not excepted. For this reason it is we bestow so much applause upon

upon the justice of the Athenians, who in a popular assembly, rejected the motion of a very beneficial secret enterprize made by Themistocles, because Aristides reported it was unjust. Justice is the common tie which binds human nature, and an offence against it is, at least in its tendency, injurious to the whole. Justice takes place among individuals, and we form our first ideas of it from particular instances.

I have a natural sense of injury; when another wrests from me what I possess as the fruit of my own industry: if I should use another in the like manner, I easily reflect upon the wrong which he must also feel; and so must consider myself as injurious; and I further perceive, that it is not possible to cultivate any agreeable intercourse betwixt us upon such terms. When the idea of justice (which thus begins at particular instances) is extended to larger societies of men, its nature still remains the same, only, from its more extensive influence, it appears in a more beautiful and engaging light. It is not, therefore, true that the product of a man's art or industry ought to be secured to him for no other reason but to give encouragement to such useful habits and accomplishments for the good of society, as our author alledges, p. 52.: for such encouragement previously supposes an affection of property to be natural to man, without which he must be entirely indifferent about the security of it. Now, if such affection be natural, it cannot possibly have any objects more natural than such things

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as are the fruit of a man's own art and industry.

To mention another example, our guilt is equal when we murder a man upon a desert island for the sake of his money, and when we commit the same crime upon one living under the same government with ourselves. It is true, in the last of these cases, the violation of justice is more inconvenient and dangerous, (which consideration our author would make the sole motive to justice), but from our natural sense of things, the crime is plainly the same. Nor can the greater prospect of impunity, which takes place in the first case, afford the smallest alleviation.

As individuals are bound to one another by the common ties of justice, so collective bodies and states are bound entirely in the same manner, and upon the same principles. We can never imagine, that men, by forming voluntary associations, and establishing themselves into large societies, are thereby at liberty to dispense with those rules of justice, which they were formerly bound to observe. Such a supposition would arise from no other idea than this, that men, by rendering themselves more powerful, might therefore be at liberty to oppress their weaker neighbours, because these are not in a condition to defend themselves, or to hurt their unjust invaders. Such a view of things is equally shocking to moral sentiment, and inconsistent with the general good.

If we suppose an impartial spectator, or an angel from heaven, to take a view of human affairs;

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he might indeed see one prince or state lay hold of a favourable opportunity unjustly to seize the territory of another. But what would his sentiments be of such conduct, with regard to the interest of mankind in general? it would plainly appear, that one state just lost as much as another gained; and, in this respect, the general interest would remain the same as it was before. But our disinterested spectator would further observe, a right violated, a treaty broke, and such distrust and resentment, thence arising, as must weaken the common tie, and disturb the peace and tranquillity of the public. The purview of justice is to render the intercourses of men with one another, in all possible occurrences, safe and agreeable, by securing their natural rights from violation upon any pretence whatever: and, to this great and general end, all our particular interests must give place, as has been already observed.

FROM what has been said, it will appear, that the moral sense at once points out to us the offices of justice; and, when considered with all its modifications, has a considerable influence to enforce the practice of it. When we add to this the benefits resulting to each individual from the general practice of justice, the motives to that virtue must be greatly increased.

ON the other hand, when we reflect upon the strength of those passions and contrary interests which thwart the operations of justice, its obligation will hardly appear to be fully secured from all that has hitherto been said. In order, therefore, to gain

gain this important point, it will be necessary to support the cause of justice by such motives and considerations as religion may furnish. And surely, it cannot reasonably be thought an impropriety to suppose that those moral sentiments which respect the great author of our particular frame, and of all things else, and those which unite us to one another, may be so connected, as that the last may receive their compleat force and vigour from the first. We shall be the more convinced of the truth of this, when we reflect a little further upon the inequality and imperfection of other motives; and, at the same time, consider the superior and unquestionable force of the religious principle.

As this topic has been insisted on, in the former section, we shall need to add but a few observations peculiarly adapted to the nature of justice.

JUSTICE is a virtue which prevents self-love from invading the rights of others, and the perfection of society depends upon the inviolable maintenance of these rights. The province of justice is therefore, in many cases, difficult and painful, as it must often oppose strong passions which lead a different way. The immediate motives to justice will, for this reason, hardly appear sufficient, in such cases, to secure its influence. If, by secret acts of injustice, a man may extricate himself from a state of poverty and distress, and rise to an easy and opulent condition; such acts of injustice may appear more inviting than any sense of general interest, and

may even baffle all the influence of moral sentiment: and, if this be the case, the consequence must be very dangerous: for justice will be thereby rendered, in a great measure, dependent upon private interest; and, as every man estimates this according to his particular taste, the practice of justice must be rendered very uncertain; and the view of this must lay such a foundation of jealousy and distrust as is inconsistent with the perfection of society, and which no natural expedients can remove.

BUT let us suppose a person of such a disposition to justice, of such a firm purpose to pursue it in every case, as that no inconveniencies or dangers are able to discourage him: such a person will yet have the mortification to reflect, that it will be impossible for him to accomplish the happy effect of universal justice, whilst others do not concur with him in it. Besides, he will act upon a very unequal footing with many other men; for, whilst he maintains an inviolable regard to their rights, they, on the other hand, will often take undue advantages of him, whereby he must meet with peculiar losses and inconveniencies: nor will the reflexion upon an upright conduct, if that is his sole recompence, always appear to be a sufficient one; especially when such reflexion is attended with this circumstance, that his conduct puts it often in the power of bad men to deprive him of many of the real advantages of this life. From considerations of this kind, and such as have been formerly mentioned, it may sufficiently appear, that justice stands in need of
superior

superior principles compleatly to support it, and give it its full effect. We shall now endeavour to shew that religion naturally furnishes us with such principles.

IN the first place, religion improves the immediate principle of justice, as it beautifies and enlarges the moral sentiment. It represents human society as intended for a perpetual duration, and this gives us the elevating hope of that happy union, which shall be the result of perfect justice. Nothing hath a stronger tendency to awaken every noble sentiment in the mind, than such a view of things as this: the opinion of a short, precarious existence, bounded by the narrow limits of this life, is apt to contract all the faculties of the soul. It represents the concerns of mankind as of little consequence, and incapable of exciting any lively sentiments in our breast.

BUT, if we shall consider man as derived from the same common author, and as intended for a perpetual society hereafter, such a view of things must add great strength to the social tie, and place the interests of mankind in the strongest point of light.

FROM the beautiful and affecting contemplation which is hereby presented to the mind, the moral sentiments must acquire new life and vigour, and operate upon the conduct with more firmness and constancy. This is beautifully represented to us by Cicero in the following passage. *Sicut una eademque natura, mundus omnibus partibus inter se congruentibus cohaeret, ac nititur; sic omnes homines inter se natura confusi, pravitate dissentiunt;*

nec se intelligunt esse consanguineos, et subiectos omnes sub unam eandemque tutelam, quod si teneretur, deorum profecto vitam homines viverent. That is, “ as this
 “ world appears to be a regular system, from the
 “ just arrangement and harmony of all its parts ;
 “ so men are united by nature, altho’ the depravity
 “ of their minds violates this union ; nor do they
 “ consider that they are all of one kindred and
 “ blood, united under the government and protection of the same guardian, which things if they
 “ were constantly kept in view, men would certainly live the life of the gods.” It is therefore evident that the motive to justice must be greatly increased from such a view of things as has been now represented. But still as that motive is founded upon immediate moral sentiment, it is, in some degree, liable to the imperfections already mentioned ; and as such sentiment is often unequal, and inconstant, we shall scarcely be able from hence to establish such an obligation to justice, as will support it in all cases, and under all temptations ; and yet such an obligation, the idea of a perfect society, necessarily requires.

WE must therefore carry our thoughts still higher, and consider justice as the law of our Creator, a law necessary to the public good. It is true, an exact obedience to this law may often expose us to great inconveniencies, but submission is still our duty, and self-love must give place to the greater good of the whole, which is an object more agreeable to the Deity, than any particular interest of ours.

THE authority of the supreme Creator must in itself appear of sufficient force fully to secure the obligation

obligation of justice. Or, if men should be disposed even to condemn that, they must have good reason to apprehend the just effects of the divine vengeance.

Discite justitiam moniti, et non temnere deos.

I cannot avoid transcribing a passage from Cicero *de legibus*, where this motive to justice is set in a strong light.

“How many things (says that great philosopher) are confirmed by an oath, how sacred are those treaties which are ratified by religion; and how many men are withheld from wickedness, by the apprehension of divine vengeance? How perfect and inviolate must that society be, which is maintained by the authority of the gods, the witnesses, and judges of our conduct.”

It is the divine authority which only can support justice in all cases. This is an object which has an universal influence, it immediately strikes the mind with an awe, and equally extends to all mankind.

It gives full authority to conscience, and confirms its empire over the conduct. In fine it is the sense of a God, as the lover, friend, and patron of justice, that ranges true self-love on its side, and assures it of a final triumph. It is this alone, that can be a sufficient match against all opposing passions, that can sustain justice in the severest trial, and support it with the certain hopes of victory at last.

AND thus only is the obligation to justice rendered firm, uniform, and compleat.

It

It is to be regretted that we have lost a dialogue of Cicero's concerning justice. Lactantius in his treatise of that subject, has preserved a few fragments of it.

FURIUS, in the person of Carneades, endeavours to subvert justice, and Cicero supports it in the person of Lælius.

FURIUS, in order to gain his point, introduces self-love, and sets it in full opposition to the purview of justice, in order to prove that virtue to be but mere folly.

IF, says he, in a shipwreck, one man should be making his way to shore upon a plank, and he should come up with another stronger than he, but just ready to sink, whether should the strong man seize the plank to save himself, and let the other perish? If he be wise, he will do it; but he will be unjust: if he be just, he will not do it; but he will be a fool. In this, and other examples of the like nature, there mentioned, Cicero and Furius are agreed in their notion of justice: and they must be so, unless we make force or private interest the measure of it. In these cases, Cicero seems to be much gravelled to maintain the cause of justice upon common topics: he is therefore obliged to carry his thoughts higher; a just man, says he, considers his blessings as divine, *bona sua divina judicat*.

LACTANTIUS takes up the argument, and endeavours to maintain the cause of justice, in the following manner.

He considers equity as the measure of it. By equity he means that idea or sentiment which arises from this consideration, that men are placed in the world by God, in a natural state of equality; and should therefore be treated as upon equal terms. Lactantius, in order to secure this rule of equity, and to preserve it from the violation of self-love, superadds piety as the just and proper motive to gain this happy effect: and thereby he sufficiently vindicates the observance of justice from the imputation of folly. He illustrates the force of this principle from the practice of the Christians.

He gives a very moving and pathetic description of the sufferings to which they were universally exposed, which nothing could exceed but that invincible patience which astonished their persecutors. For this, says he, the Heathens think us the arrantest fools in nature, when we might avoid all these torments, by taking a little incense betwixt our fingers, and throwing it into the fire. But he justifies their conduct, from considerations of piety, and the regards we stand in to God. Shall the Heathens, says he, praise to the skies those who were willing to lose their life for a friend, and must we be thought fools, if we are ready to lose ours for our God? A slave, he adds, who deserts his master, a son who abandons his father, are by men deemed infamous, and deserving of the severest punishment. And could we be guiltless, if we should desert God who is our parent and our master in a much superior sense?

THUS,

THUS, religion appears to be the firmest guard of justice, and able to support it in the severest trials.

THE dignity of justice seems to arise chiefly from this consideration that it subjects self-interest to the public good. Hence that applause which is bestowed upon the heroes of antiquity, Hercules, Codrus, Regulus, the Decii, and other great men, who by serving their country at the expence of every thing dear to themselves, have transmitted their names to posterity with immortal honour. But such noble achievements of justice can never be reconciled to the councils of wisdom, without the mediation of religion. The religious principle must be supposed to enter into the motive, in some degree or other, otherwise it must be accounted downright enthusiasm; which, as it is destitute of a solid foundation, must languish, and die away, before a cool and deliberate reflexion.

FROM the slightest review of these short observations made upon the nature and force of the obligation of justice, it will appear, that our duty and our interest must influence us to the practice of it.

JUSTICE is not founded upon that interest which is constituted by particular passions. It is a distinct principle of our nature, capable of the highest improvement from a nobler, tho' more remote, view of public good, and it is often opposed by the former interest.

IT is not merely the result of humanity; for that could not sufficiently distinguish its nature,
nor

nor support it in opposition to contrary passions.

It is a peculiar tie necessary to connect the parts of the social system, and to produce the greatest good upon the whole: and, viewed in this light, it must not only excite the most agreeable and elevating sentiments, but must also appear to be the will of the Deity who plans the general good; and, in this respect, we ought ever to comply with it, and must certainly find our own account in so doing.

S E C T.

S E C T. III.

Of C H A S T I T Y.

THE general good may justly be considered as the ultimate end and object of social virtue ; as the chief province of this last is to pursue all those means that may be most necessary and useful to attain such an excellent end. The general good is an object as fixed and determined in the nature of things, at least in many material respects, as it is certain we stand in need of air to breathe in, and of food to support our lives : and therefore virtue, which has a necessary relation to this, must be equally fixed and determined too. The notion of general good and utility seems to differ, as the end and the means ; but, as in that respect, they are also intimately connected, it is perhaps not necessary always to attend to this distinction.

A sense of public good is a moral tie which binds us to the pursuit of that object as a proper and agreeable end. The sense of public good is, however, not an immediate or innate spring of virtue, but the more distant effect of an attentive and deliberate reflexion. Virtue begins with particular acts, and for that purpose, is influenced by particular sentiments. Justice, for example, leads one man to show certain regards to another,
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and there is a strong and particular sentiment or sense of justice, which recommends such conduct. A proper reflexion will further show, that such conduct is not only good betwixt one man and another, but also necessary to render men useful members of society, whereby a greater and more general good may be attained. Thus a sense of public good is more remote; but, when brought near by reflexion, it will appear of greater weight, and for that reason, ought to govern and regulate our more immediate and particular sentiments: at the same time, it must be allowed, that those last sentiments are truly a part of our nature; and therefore, as such, ought to enter into our complex idea of general good, and have a particular regard paid to them accordingly. It is unnecessary to repeat here what has formerly been demonstrated, that moral sense, or sentiment, whether more general or more particular, is not sufficient to secure the full obligation of virtue, without enlarging our idea of society, and strengthening and supporting it with a proper sense of the natural authority of a supreme cause, of a wise and intelligent governor. Thus, in a family, or more enlarged society, the natural principles that tend to unite the members thereof, would never have a full effect, without the proper influence of that authority which is vested in the parent, or chief magistrate.

WE have already endeavoured to show how far our author has perverted the idea of common utility or public good, in accounting for the source and origin of justice. We shall just ob-

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serve

serve what he says with regard to benevolence. He makes utility to be the source of a considerable part of its merit, tho' not of it all. Let us here consider friendship as a remarkable species of benevolence. That friendship is useful, or that it procures many external advantages, is, no doubt, true; but then these advantages do not, in the least, enter into the source of friendship; nor do they constitute that mental satisfaction, that peculiar delight which naturally flows from it, and in which indeed its very essence consists.

WE are willing to part with any thing to oblige a real friend; but we despise the man who professes friendship, if, in the mean time, we are satisfied, that his only aim is to procure some external favour or utility to himself. Cicero's observations upon this subject must appear extremely just. *Ubi beneficus, si nemo alterius causa beneficit? ubi illa sancta amicitia, si non ipse amicus per se amatur, toto pectore, ut dicitur? qui etiam deferendus et abjiciendus est, desperatis emolumentis ac fructibus, quo quid potest dici immanius?*

CHASTITY is another virtue which our author seems much displeased with, and without considering whether it is founded upon an essential sentiment, and is truly a proper part of our nature; because it does not correspond to his imaginary notions of utility, he therefore thinks fit entirely to dismiss it.

THE delicacy of the subject will not permit us to enter into such a particular discussion of it, as minutely to point out the natural influence of this virtue upon the comfort and happiness of society,

ciety, and the direct tendency of the opposite vice to introduce a great part of those miseries which distress mankind. But a little reflexion upon such considerations as may occasionally fall in our way, with a common attention to what really passes in the world, may be sufficient to afford us full conviction with regard to this matter.

At present it is our chief design, to consider how far chastity is a natural virtue, and a sense of it is wrought into the inward frame of our constitution, especially as it regards the female sex; in which light alone our author is pleased to consider it. But before we proceed to this, it will be proper to state his opinion concerning this virtue.

He takes notice of chastity, *p.* 66. and considers it as a female virtue; but then he affirms that it is only a virtue belonging to a married woman, because, says he, "it arises solely from this consideration of utility, that the long and helpless infancy of man, requires the combination of both parents for the subsistence of their young; and without such utility, such a virtue would never have been thought of."

Thus young women, according to our author, have nothing to do with chastity, and virtue does by no means require them to regard it. Whether he contradicts himself in the note immediately subjoined, does not clearly appear; but let it be supposed he does, he avers, at least, that tho' women capable of having children, ought to observe the rules of chastity; yet, when past that date, they have nothing to do with them. And he plainly insinuates, that, at such an age, to deem chastity

a virtue, is the result of an irregular imagination, and that it discovers a real want of true judgment. However, he gives this seasonable caution to his elderly practitioners, that they manage their intrigues with secrecy and discretion, lest their example should prove ensnaring to the younger sort. Tho' he has in this manner circumscribed chastity, yet he is not long satisfied with this opinion; for afterwards, *p.* 247. he subverts it altogether, and, upon pretence of preferring what he calls the agreeable to the useful, would remove every restraint of a free commerce betwixt the sexes: and adds, "Instances of licence daily multiplying, will weaken the scandal with the one sex, and teach the other, by degrees, to adopt the famous maxim of La Fontaine with regard to female infidelity, That if one knows it, it is but a small matter; if one knows it not, it is nothing." Thus (our author having established two sources of virtue, the useful and the agreeable) he here, upon pretence of the agreeable, supports infidelity to the marriage-bed, or, in common language, adultery, in opposition to two virtues united, both founded, by his own admission, upon the useful, *viz.* justice and chastity.

'Tis easy to see how far this notion may lead us; and that, from the idea of the agreeable, a man may desire, and, if he safely can, endeavour to possess his neighbour's estate, as well as his wife; and perhaps the last may be more agreeable to the greatest part of men, than the first.

THERE appears no need of much argument to refute these absurdities. We shall therefore but shortly

shortly consider, how far chastity is founded in nature, and is really a part of the human frame, especially as it regards the female sex.

LOVE between the sexes, is a natural passion deeply rooted in the human heart, for a very important end. At the same time, it is not, as in other animals, limited and restrained by that end; its influence goes a great deal further. And such often is its impetuosity, that it is apt to hurry us into very irregular and pernicious excesses. It must then be happy for us, if we can find a principle in our nature calculated to check the irregularities, and prevent the disorders of this passion. Such a principle is chastity; a virtue whose nature and province it is, so to regulate and govern the passion of love, as to secure to us its real blessings, and prevent its hurtful, and frequently fatal effects. This is, no doubt, a province of the utmost importance to us; yet we must examine it with abundance of reserve, and be contented with some general observations.

THE smallest reflexion must make it evident, what wonderful art and contrivance Providence has discovered, to make an eminent distinction betwixt man and the inferior animals. These have no nice feelings in their nature at all; they are guided by an immediate and unceremonial instinct. But with regard to man, 'tis beautiful to observe, that nature has placed the two sexes, designed for the strictest union, yet, in the mean time, at the greatest distance from one other, and that by intervention of certain delicate and agreeable sensa-

tions, intimately wrought into the constitution of each.

THE one sex is inspired with awe and respect, a kind of veneration arising from the supposed virtue and dignity of the other; and these sentiments forbid the rash and unhallowed approach which beauty would seem to solicit. The other sex maintain their distance, by a graceful modesty, a decent pride, and inward consciousness of worth. These sentiments are as naturally, as elegantly, expressed by Milton :

*Greatness of mind, and nobleness their seat
Build in her loveliest, and create an awe
About her, as a guard angelic plac'd.*

And,

*She heard me thus, and tho' divinely brought,
Yet innocence, and virgin modesty,
Her virtue; and the conscience of her worth
That would be woo'd, and not unsought, be won,
Not obvious, not obtrusive, but retir'd,
The more desirable.*

THE tender impressions are no doubt mutual, but it is the privilege of the one, to make an honourable advance, and the beauty of the other, to make a decent defence.

THE one approaches by all the gentle offices which a kind complacence can inspire: if the other yields, it is yet with a reluctant modesty, and only in full confidence of a sincere and permanent affection. And hence an union of hearts is formed upon the faith of an indissoluble friendship, sweetened and refined by the soft endearments of

a tender passion. These are but imperfect sketches of the inimitably beautiful and delicate movements of the mind, in the passion of love ; a passion which enters deep into the human constitution, and makes a considerable figure in the history of mankind.

WHAT then does nature intend by thus arraying the passion of love with all this profusion of agreeable sentiments ? Does she only mean to recommend a selfish and sensual gratification ? No, she plainly points out to us respect, modesty, mutual tenderness, constancy, and faith. And all this beautiful assemblage enters into the idea of chastity. Nature seems to have taken particular care, that we should not forget the resemblance we bear to nobler ranks of beings, even whilst we taste those corporeal pleasures common to us with the brute creation. Nay, she will not so much as allow the conscious dignity, inspired by so many moral graces, to excuse the blushes arising from those grosser sensations.

THUS chastity plainly appears to be a common, as well as an important virtue, tho', no doubt, for reasons needless to be mentioned, it is more essential and ornamental to the female sex. As chastity is thus strongly rooted in nature, it is no less recommended by its happy influence, and agreeable effects. It respectively secures the peace, the faith, the friendship, and honour of either sex, and all the sweet interchanges of mutual love. Whereas the contrary vice must reverse this agreeable scene, nay, and often view with an unfeeling heart the wretchedness, infamy, and ruin of the person

person once beloved, and who reposed too great trust in the slippery faith of man. I cannot conclude this subject better than in my Lord Shaftsbury's words. "There can be no slavery, says he, (speaking of love), greater than what is consequent to the dominion and rule of this passion. "Of all other it is the least manageable by favour or concession, and assumes the most from privilege and indulgence. What it costs us in the modesty and ingenuity of our natures, and in the faith and honesty of our characters, is as easily apprehended by any one who will reflect. "And it will from hence appear, that there is no passion, which, in its extravagance and excess, more necessarily occasions disorder, and unhappinesses."

THO' it may indeed appear needless, yet we shall make a very few reflexions upon what seems to have been the sense of mankind, especially with regard to female chastity. This virtue has always been considered by the poets as an essential ingredient in the purity and felicity of the golden age; and, when this happy period gave way to the prevailing corruption of manners, they have still regarded chastity as an attendant on the innocence of a rural life. Thus Virgil enumerates it among the blessings of that calm and peaceful state;

Castia pudicitiam servat domus.

'TIS certain, that all nations of the world have had a particular regard to this virtue, and ever have annexed infamy and reproach to the opposite vice.

vice. Hence there was a common law among the Greeks, that no whore should borrow her name from any of their sacred games. Infamy indeed seems to be so essential to the idea annexed to this word, that we will scarce allow the bitterest repentance to wipe it off.

BUT, not to launch out too far, we shall confine ourselves to the regards shown to this virtue by the Romans, who may be considered as the best models. We are told, (a thing hardly credible), that, for upwards of five hundred years, there was no instance of a divorce among that people. Nay, the antient Romans were so nice in their sentiments of chastity, that they regarded a woman, who entered into a second marriage, in an unfavourable light; and were in use to honour, with a crown of chastity, the matrons who refused to do so, as Valerius Maximus informs us.

UPON chastity they seem to have rested the perpetuity of their state; and the preservation of the sacred fire which was the emblem of this virtue, they trusted to the particular care of a certain number of spotless virgins. Those sacred vestals enjoyed distinguished privileges. But, if they forfeited their virtue, 'tis well known with what severity the crime was expiated. Chastity makes a great figure in the Roman history, and gave occasion to the most remarkable revolutions of that state. The Romans submitted, with incredible patience, to the tyrannical government of the Tarquins. But a sense of violated chastity roused, all at once, that spirit, which a thousand other acts of oppression

oppression could not awake. And the vengeance, provoked by the dishonour done to Lucretia, laid the foundation of the greatest commonwealth on earth.

THE Romans again fell under oppression, and the cruelty of the Decemvirs became unsupportable to the people, but all their sufferings could not force them upon the means of redress. It was an attempt upon the honour of a young Plebeian maid which alone could effect this, and restore liberty to Rome. Had this been a common wrong, Appius might have accomplished it as he did a thousand others. But it must appear an injury deeply accented, and directed against the most quick and sensible part of nature, which could make a fond father plunge his dagger in the bosom of his beloved, his innocent and lovely child; and could make all Rome take part in a quarrel which their own grievances, their own utility, could not engage them in.

SUCH a powerful energy has chastity upon the human heart: and sure this was not peculiar to the Romans, but is natural to all mankind. Every father, every brother, will find the like resentments rise in his breast from such wrongs; and few injuries are more cruelly revenged. Nay, we shall find, that passion, interest and honour are not able to pervert those natural sentiments. The dissolute themselves are forced to give testimony to the native excellence of chastity. It does not surprise us, if a severe Juvenal lashes, with the utmost indignation, the unchast manners of the age; and treats even vice itself perhaps
with

with too little delicacy. But we shall find men of pleasure, even a Sallust and a Horace do the same thing. The former was notoriously dissolute in his manners, and yet there is no one makes juster reflexions upon the low account to be made of corporeal pleasures, or more magnifies the superior satisfactions of the mind. Horace was a slave to an irregular passion; and yet, in his sober hours, he gives a feeling description of the bad effects of that passion; which, says he, first disorders and pollutes private families; and thence spreads its baneful contagion through the whole people. He severely animadvertes upon the corruptions of his own age, and makes a just encomium upon the chaste and sober manners of the antient Romans, by which they were formed for the noblest achievements: of this we have a remarkable proof in the sixth ode of his third book.

By this time, it must appear evident, that chastity is a virtue strongly founded in the human constitution. 'Tis true, the one sex has some pretence to insist upon a lesser obligation to this virtue. But then, if the other could be persuaded universally to preserve it inviolate, the privilege ours might boast of, would resolve into an empty name.

HITHERTO we have considered chastity in general, without any relation to the marriage-vow; but, as our author would endeavour to destroy it, even in this respect, it may be proper to add a few observations more to explode this extraordinary opinion.

MARRIAGE

MARRIAGE is certainly an original institution. It is a natural bond of love and constant friendship, whereby the comforts of life are multiplied, and its cares are divided. *Nibil tam humanum est, quam fortuitis casibus, mulieris maritum, uxorem viri participem esse*, as Ulpian elegantly expresses it. This union is the source of families, the genuine and kind nurse of society. It establishes a natural government, the end of which is the care and education of children. Each parent has a peculiar task in this œconomy: and their concern must be, not merely to protect and support the persons of their children, but chiefly to regulate their passions, and form their minds in such manner as to make them useful and valuable members of society. The whole administration is sweetened, and rendered agreeable by conjugal and parental love: and from the due execution of it, all the streams of domestic and social happiness flow. The smallest reflexion upon this faint delineation of the marriage-state, must convince us, that fidelity to the nuptial vow, is a virtue of the utmost importance. Upon the observance of it depends the order, security, peace, and comfort of families; from whence also the more extensive blessings of society derive their source. But the violation of it, in place of that friendship which is the greatest blessing on earth, produces domestic broils, intestine disorder, and the neglect of those dear pledges who demand the cordial and joint aid of both parents; which neglect must widely diffuse its fatal effects through human society. Nay, the violation of the marriage-

riage-covenant is apt to provoke the most cruel jealousy and severe revenge : so that the blood of thousands, and the overthrow of states have not satiated the vengeance inflamed by this one crime. Is not, then, infidelity to the marriage-bed a vice ? if it is not, surely nothing else can be such. Adultery has indeed been justly considered as a most enormous crime by all mankind. The punishment of it antiently among the oriental nations, was stoning to death. This appears from the Jewish law ; and from what Homer makes Hector say to his brother Paris, that, if he had got what he deserved, he had long ago been stoned to death.

VARIOUS and severe were the punishments inflicted on it by the laws of the several states of Greece ; some of them so shameful and infamous as can scarce be mentioned with decency. When the Lepreates, says Ælian, detect an adulterer, they lead him bound through their city, for three several days, and account him infamous for ever thereafter. An adulteress they oblige to stand at the market-place, for eleven days, having no other covering than a thin transparent garment, without a girdle : and thus they make her infamy compleat.

'Tis true, at Sparta, for a long time, they had no law against adultery : but the reason of this we learn from the following passage of Plutarch, " Geraclus, says he, a primitive Spartan, being asked by a stranger, what punishment their law had appointed for adulterers ? replied, " there were no adulterers in his country : but re-

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" turned

“ turned the stranger, suppose there were one,
 “ and the crime were proved against him, how
 “ would you punish him? He answered, that
 “ the offender must pay to the plaintiff a bull
 “ with a neck so long, as that he might reach over
 “ the mountain Taygetus, and drink of the river
 “ Eurotas, that runs on the other side. The
 “ man, surprised at this, said, why? ’tis impos-
 “ sible to find such a bull. Geraclus, smilingly
 “ replied, ’tis just as possible to find an adulter-
 “ er at Sparta.” The case seems to have been
 the same with the Romans; for a long time adul-
 tery was scarce known among them. ’Tis true,
 when luxury had unstrung all their pristine virtue,
 and introduced a total dissolution of manners,
 adultery became a very fashionable and polite
 vice. It was not, however, the less pernicious;
 for, as Livy observes of the Romans of his
 time, their vices were become an unsupportable
 burden to themselves; and yet, at the same time,
 they could not submit to their proper remedies.

AUGUSTUS CESAR, a prince of great pru-
 dence, thought it necessary to make the reforma-
 tion of manners an object of his principal atten-
 tion. He made many wise laws to restore the
 credit of chastity, and discourage the contrary
 vice. Banishment was the pain he inflicted
 upon adultery; which, in after-times, was
 made a capital crime. To Augustus’s wise regu-
 lations, Horace alludes in the following verses:

*Nullis polluitur casta domus stupris;
 Mos et lex, maculosum edomuit nefas.*

Laudantur

*Laudantur simili prole puerperæ,
Culpam pœna premit comes.*

CICERO places adultery amongst those atrocious crimes, whose natural and manifest turpitude, no consent or authority could remove. Nay, the crime of adultery appeared so odious and unnatural, that the Roman law indulged private vengeance to the father in certain circumstances; and sometimes to the husband.

THESE cursory observations appear more than sufficient to refute the infamous maxim of LaFontaine quoted by our author. That "female infidelity, or adultery, if known, is a small matter; if not known, is nothing at all." A maxim which can only be built upon such dissolute principles as will equally justify every thing, the most obscene, the most unnatural and shocking that can be imagined.

WE shall conclude this subject by quoting a passage from a late celebrated writer of morality; where the reflexions will appear to be just and natural, and to carry their own evidence along with them.

"THERE is no enjoyment of external pleasure, says Mr. Hutchinson, which has more imposed upon men of late, by some confused species of morality, than gallantry. The sensible pleasures alone must, by all men who have the least reflexion, be esteemed at a very low rate: but the desires of this kind (as they were by nature intended to found the most constant uninterrupted friendships, and to introduce the

“ most venerable and lovely relations by marriages
“ and families) arise in our hearts, attended with
“ some of the sweetest affections, with a disinterested love and tenderness, with a most gentle and obliging deportment, with something great and heroic in our temper. The wretch, who rises no higher, in this passion, than the mean sensual gratification, is abhorred by every one. But those sublimer sensations and passions do often so fill the imaginations of the amorous, that they are unawares led into the most contemptible and cruel conduct which can be imagined. When, for some trifling transitory sensations, which they might have innocently enjoyed, along with the highest moral pleasures, in marriage, they expose the very person they love and admire to the deepest infamy and sorrow, to the contempt of the world, to perpetual confusion, remorse and anguish; or, to what is worse, an insensibility of all honour and shame, virtue or vice, good or evil; to be the scorn and aversion of the world: and all this, coloured over with the gay notions of pleasantry, genteelness, politeness, courage, high enjoyment of life.

“ Would men allow themselves a little time
“ to reflect on the whole effect of such capricious pursuits, the anguish and distraction of mind which these sallies of pleasure give to husbands, fathers, brothers; would they consider, how they themselves would resent such treatment of a wife, a child, a sister; how much deeper such distresses are than those trifling
“ fling

“ fling losses or damages, for which we think it
“ just to bring the authors of them to the gal-
“ lows ; sure, none but a thorough villain could
“ either practise, or approve, the one more than
“ the other.”

S E C T. IV.

Reflexions upon Mr. HOME's scheme in general.

WHEN we consider with any degree of attention the present imperfection of the human mind, and the disorder which manifestly prevails in the passions : when we further reflect upon the complex and extensive nature of virtue, which regulates our conduct in the various relations we stand in to other beings, in the competitions of such relations, and the numberless accidents that may change and vary their position. When we join together all these circumstances, 'tis no wonder if we are often at a loss to know our proper duty, and if, in many cases, the distinctions betwixt right and wrong appear very imperceptible. It seems to have been from reflexions of this kind, that Plato in his 2d Alcibiades affirms, that we stand in need of the assistance of some superior being, to remove the mist that obscures our mind, and to furnish us with the proper means to distinguish between good and evil, and teach us how to act in a right manner, both with regard to God and man. Tho' these difficulties must, no doubt, be acknowledged, yet we have already shown, that the great lines of duty are, for the most part, clearly discoverable, if we will be at any reasonable

reasonable pains to investigate them. And, where the difference betwixt right and wrong is rendered obscure, either by their near approach to the common boundary of both, or from some other peculiar, and complicated circumstances; yet, in such cases, an honest intention will, in a good measure, excuse a mistake in judgment, and, for the most part, prevent any palpable bad consequences of such mistake.

OUR author's professed design appears to be, to clear up the principles of morals, and place them in such a new and strong point of light, as to render it more easy in particular cases, to discover the real difference betwixt right and wrong, and thereby to promote, and facilitate, the universal practice of virtue. But when the manner, in which he has executed this laudable design, is considered, we must be under a strong temptation to think, that he has on the contrary exerted all the force of his genius, applied the whole edge of that subtilty and acuteness, in which he excels, to extenuate, and render as imperceptible as possible, the difference betwixt virtue and vice, nay, to confound both in one undistinguishable chaos. 'Tis however equitable to presume, that the too great refinement, and subtilty of his ideas, have carried him unwittingly not a little out of a just situation, whereby he must have observed the several objects of moral truth in an undue light, and at improper distances, and been thereby misled into wrong conclusions. How far the observation just now made upon the author's execution of his projected purpose, is just, may partly appear from what has already

ready been said, and will still be discovered in a stronger light, when we shall continue to follow him through some further particulars of his plan.

BEFORE we proceed to take notice of the author's peculiar notion of virtue, it may be of use to observe in general, that into whatever principle we resolve virtue, that principle will appear stronger, or weaker, according to the nature of the object to which it is applied, as it may likewise, in itself, admit of very different degrees of strength: for example, should we resolve virtue into the sole principle of benevolence, that principle in its own nature may be either weaker, or stronger, or, in its exercise, may admit of various degrees of strength, according to the different nature of the objects which excite its influences. It must be a necessary consequence of this observation, that, in many cases, virtue or vice may approach so near the common boundary, that it may be difficult to distinguish them. And tho' we should distinguish them, the one will not appear to have great beauty, nor the other great deformity. But if from this we should proceed to infer, that there is no essential difference betwixt virtue and vice, such inference would be equally false and dangerous. The truth of this last proposition will perhaps be best illustrated by the consideration of similar cases. Light and darkness, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery may severally be supposed to approach so near one another, as that it may be very difficult to distinguish them, and the real difference will be very inconsiderable. 'Tis however evident, that this can never be a reason
for

for confounding those things, so manifestly different and opposite in their natures. The case must be the same with regard to virtue, it stands in equal opposition to vice, how near soever it may approach unto it in particular cases.

THERE is one piece of sophistry that appears to run thro' the whole of our author's reasoning; that when he assumes what he supposes to be the proper principle of virtue, he illustrates this, by condescending on those qualities which he accounts virtuous, and insensibly carries the mind from qualities truly noble and excellent, till it is led, by many intermediate steps, to qualities whose value is scarcely at all perceivable; and whilst he resolves them all into a sentiment of the same kind, we are apt to confound them, and are in danger of estimating at an equal rate, things in their nature extremely different; at least this is a danger which we are not sufficiently guarded against.

BUT this is not the most essential error which our author has fallen into: he has misunderstood the proper nature of virtue, and, proceeding upon a fundamental mistake, has been led into a thousand absurdities. His notion of virtue is, that it is the possession of such qualities as are useful or agreeable to ourselves or others. The nature, the merit of virtue, he places in its utility, as he resolves that into a common sentiment of humanity: humanity, I mean, in the observer; for most of those qualities placed by him among the virtues, are very different from humanity, and even many of them, as will by and by appear, do
not

not so much as belong to the soul. That virtue is recommended chiefly by its utility, we must with our author agree. But it is necessary to add further, that the utility of virtue is of a peculiar kind, it has something in its nature that gives it a superior excellence, and essentially distinguishes it from the common idea of utility. Tho' we were not able to point out this quality of virtue, from which its peculiar excellence arises; yet the general consent of mankind, even of the vicious in their sober hours, must be a sufficient proof that such a quality is real, because such consent must be founded upon some natural sentiment which the idea of virtue immediately touches. But there appears no difficulty to point out this property of virtue, which is the source of its peculiar beauty and excellence. We have already shown, that an intention to do good, is essentially included in the notion of virtue. This intention is founded in original sentiment and affection, and capable of the greatest improvement by means of proper reasoning and reflexion, and of being thereby rendered a strong and habitual principle of action. Let us then suppose a man of this character, one who has an habitual inclination and intention to do good, and even to subject his own private gratifications to the more general good of others, who has been at pains to render this disposition a firm and uniform principle of conduct. How lovely is such a character, what a benign aspect does it bear to society. It is an original, active and natural source of blessings, which are thence derived to mankind in bounteous and delightful streams.

WHAT

WHAT is our author's man of virtue, in comparison of such a character? he may be wise, learned, brave, witty, chearful, handsome, cleanly, rich, and great. He may possess all these qualities, and a thousand more of the same kind, and yet be without virtue. For let us suppose, that he has no habitual purpose or intention to do good to others, but that his own sensual and selfish gratification is the sole study and care of his life: in what a mean and inglorious light must he appear? at best he can be considered but as an useless and unworthy member of society. But let us further suppose, that he has an habitual inclination to do ill, and takes delight in mischief, or, which is not much better, that he prefers the least selfish pleasure to any greater degree of public good, in this case he must be regarded as the greatest nuisance and pest of society, and the more dangerous, the greater his qualities and abilities are; and mankind will find it their interest, and the best justice they can do to themselves, to get rid of him as soon as they can.

ALL those qualities, accounted virtuous by our author in respect of their utility, are indeed useful: but in what sense? in this only, that they are capable of being put to a good use; but they may be also put to a bad one.

Now what is it that determines betwixt these different and contrary effects, and gives the preference to the first? 'Tis virtue, or the virtuous disposition above noticed.

'Tis virtue, then, that claims the whole praise
of

of the utility of those qualities, and not the qualities themselves.

LET us suppose a ship well built, her rudder, masts, rigging and sails justly proportioned ; all these are useful, and render her fit for navigation. But their utility is plainly relative to the skill of the master or pilot, without which it would signify nothing at all : and when he has happily performed a long and difficult voyage, the praise of it properly belongs to him : and the commendations we bestow upon the make of the ship itself, are plainly relative, and imply its fitness to serve the purposes of a proper navigator. The parallel is so plain and obvious, that it stands in need of no illustration.

FROM what has been said in general, our author's whole scheme seems to be sufficiently subverted. But, to set this matter still in a clearer light, it may be proper to condescend upon some of the particular virtues, of which he has given a very large catalogue. And 'tis hoped, a few instances may suffice for our present purpose, for it would be endless to run over them all. He indeed crouds into his assemblage of virtues, every endowment of the mind, every quality of the body, and every external ornament, and advantage of fortune. With regard to the first, which seem to have the fairest claim to the title of virtue, we shall single out a few of them, as sufficient for the illustration of our argument. And let these be genius, courage, prudence, and industry ; for with regard to benevolence, we have already particularly considered the nature of these affections. It

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is to be observed in the first place, that virtue supposes the reality and existence of those, and other such mental qualities, in some proper degree: for virtue is no other than the right application of such qualities, and exerting them in such manner as to attain the good end proposed. If a man is therefore entirely destitute of them, he can have no character at all, and must certainly be regarded in a very mean and contemptible light.

BUT then, when we suppose the reality of these qualities, they do not immediately become virtues. A wicked and malicious nature may be supposed possessed of them all. He may have great knowledge and capacity to devise ill, great prudence, or cunning rather, in discovering the means of accomplishing it, and abundance of industry and resolution in the use and application of those means. And this is the very idea that we form of the devil himself: nay, we may suppose, that a person possessed of the above qualities, may make a right application of them, and yet not deserve the title of virtuous. For, if he is destitute of the good intention mentioned, if he acts from corrupt and selfish views, 'tis plain he does good by accident, not by choice: his character cannot be depended upon, and whilst we have the principle of his conduct distinctly in view, it is impossible we can pronounce him virtuous. These things are so clear, that our conviction is a necessary effect of the smallest attention; they so invariably tally with the natural sentiments of man, that they must instantly produce an universal assent.

To be remarkably deficient in any of the above qualities, must give pain, for the reason already mentioned; but, industriously to misapply them, participates more of the positive nature of vice, and exposes to juster odium.

WISDOM is indeed an illustrious quality; but then it derives all its lustre from the goodness of the end to which it is applied, or is at least supposed to be applicable.

FOLLY, if considered as a total deprivation of wisdom, is the object of our pity, or at most of our contempt. Thus we may pity or despise an idiot, but would think it cruel to hurt him; whereas a villain, as such we also hate, and would think it just to punish him. If we consider folly as opposite to prudence, it participates of a moral nature; and a person who neglects the proper means which he might have used, we may not only despise, but think worthy of blame and punishment, tho' in a lesser degree, than one of a direct bad intention.

It is very possible, that a man may own, nay, even boast, of a bad action; and yet take it ill to be called a fool. But, however self-love may influence the opinion we form of our own conduct, it will not regulate the sentiments of others. The rest of mankind will put a real criminal to death; at the same time that they defend a fool from any injury attempted to be done him as such.

COURAGE, as well as prudence, is of a mixed nature; it signifies that fortitude and firmness of mind which arises from the natural strength of constitution: it also signifies that resolution with
which

which we are inspired by the consideration of the goodness of an end. And it will readily be allowed, that one man may possess a greater degree of the first kind of courage than another; and yet, on many occasions, be inferior to him with regard to the last. Cowardice must therefore fall under the same view, and be either an object of contempt, or blame. And, as we cannot certainly penetrate into the motives of mens actions, we commonly conjoin both sentiments, and consider cowardice as a vice.

'Tis needless to pursue the argument into further particulars. The case plainly appears to be this; the mental qualities are necessary to the operations of virtue; and the more considerable these are, this last may be rendered the more illustrious; but then it is to be noticed, on the other hand, that vice may also be the more aggravated. Our author's capital mistake, therefore, is, the confounding these qualities themselves, with the proper use we make of them. And the mistake seems plainly to arise from the praise we commonly bestow upon the qualities themselves, abstractly considered. But then 'tis evident, that, when these qualities are applied to real life, this praise must relate to the right use we make, or may be supposed to make, of them. For nothing is more certain than this, that, if we make a bad use of those qualities, they are denominated vicious. Now, how can the same qualities be both virtuous and vicious, simply considered in themselves? These epithets must certainly arise from the different relations they stand in to some-

thing else. Our author, then, falls into a gross mistake, in supposing, that the great abilities of Agathocles tended to his praise and honour; when, at the same time, he employed all those abilities in the cruel exercise of tyranny and oppression. A person of small enduements is not capable of any great degree either of virtue or vice. But one possessed of great abilities, is capable of a high degree of either, according as he uses them.

We are not always critical and exact in our language or thoughts, and so we may sometimes commend a quality in a man, tho' misapplied, and therefore bad by having a tacit reference to a right use that might be made of such quality. But, in philosophical inquiries, those inaccuracies may be very dangerous; especially where principles are built upon them.

Our author would endeavour to support his theory, from the authority of the antients. But the praises which these bestow upon the qualities of the mind are plainly to be accounted for in the manner we have done.

If we consider Cicero's cardinal virtues, justice will be allowed properly to be one; and so must temperance too, originally indeed a private virtue, but having also a necessary influence upon the social ones. We have shown, that prudence and fortitude are of a mixed nature; but, if we consider them as simple mental qualities, they are so immediately useful in the exercise of virtue, that they may receive that denomination without great impropriety. It is, however, to be remembered,

remembered, that, if they are misapplied, they will justly be accounted vicious. Cicero borrows his distribution of the virtues from Panetius the Stoic. Juvenal was of the same sect. In his tenth satire, (the finest perhaps that ever was wrote), he exposes, with great spirit and justness of thought, the vanity of power, eloquence and ambition, fortitude and military glory, and other things which men are apt to set a high value upon, when he considers them as not under the influence of virtue. The antients, to be sure, can not be of any avail to our author, as their notions of virtue were diametrically opposite to his. But it is needless to use any other authority to refute our author, than his own. Having embraced a false and unnatural hypothesis, it was not to be expected he could be consistent with himself. Accordingly he has contradicted, in strong and direct terms, all the theory which he has here been establishing with so much care. In p. 23. he expresses himself in the following manner; "Exalted capacity, undaunted courage, prosperous success; these may only expose a hero or politician to the envy and malignity of the public. But, as soon as the praises are added of humane and beneficent; when instances are displayed of lenity, tenderness and friendship, envy itself is silent, or joins the general voice of applause and acclamation." Thus he plainly insinuates, that the noblest qualities of the mind, even when attended with success, yet if they are not influenced by virtue or right intention, may rather excite envy, than gain applause; and

we may add, as a necessary consequence, that, if these qualities are governed by a direct bad intention, and employed to distress mankind, they must excite hatred and aversion too. 'Tis goodness, 'tis right intention alone, that infuses that charm which so much captivates and delights. This entirely coincides with the scheme we have laid down; but is totally subversive of that of our author.

It may not be improper to illustrate the preceding argument by a remarkable example, whereby the difference betwixt the moral virtues, and those other qualities and things mentioned by our author, may appear in the strongest point of light.

WHEN the Duke de Sully, in 1603, set out on an embassy for the court of England, he was attended by a numerous retinue of the principal gentlemen in France: amongst the rest Mr. Servin presented his young son to him; at the same time, earnestly begging the Duke, that he would use his best endeavours to make him an honest man. This request gave Sully a great curiosity to search into his character. And he gives the following account of him, which we shall not abridge.

“ His genius, says he, was so lively that nothing could escape his penetration, his apprehension was so quick, that he understood every thing in an instant, and his memory so prodigious, that he never forgot any thing. He was master of all the branches of philosophy, the mathematics; particularly fortification
“ and

“ and designing. Nay, he was so thoroughly ac-
“ quainted with divinity, that he was an excellent
“ preacher, when he pleased, and could manage
“ the controversy for, or against, the Protestant
“ religion with the greatest ability. He not on-
“ ly understood the Greek, Hebrew, and other
“ learned languages, but all the jargons of the
“ moderns. He entered so exactly into their ac-
“ cent and pronunciation, to which he joined
“ such a perfect imitation of their air and man-
“ ners, that not only the people of the different
“ nations in Europe, but of the several provinces
“ of France, would have taken him for a na-
“ tive of the country. He applied this talent
“ to imitate all sorts of persons, which he per-
“ formed with wonderful dexterity; and was ac-
“ cordingly the best comedian in the world. He
“ was a good poet, an excellent musician, and
“ sung with equal art and sweetness. He said
“ mass; for he would do every thing, as well as
“ know every thing. His body was perfectly
“ proportioned to his mind. He was well made,
“ vigorous and agile, formed for all sorts of ex-
“ ercises. He rode a horse well, and was admi-
“ red for dancing, leaping, and wrestling. He
“ was acquainted with all kinds of sports and di-
“ versions, and could practise in most of the me-
“ chanical arts. Reverse the medal, says Sully :
“ He was a liar, false, treacherous, cruel, and
“ cowardly, a sharper, drunkard and glutton. He
“ was a gamester, an abandoned debauchee, a bla-
“ sphemer and Atheist. In a word, he was pos-
“ sessed of every vice, contrary to nature, to ho-
“ nour,

"nour, to religion, and society : he persisted in
 "his vices to the last, and fell a sacrifice to his de-
 "baucheries, in the flower of his age ; he died
 "in a public stew, holding the glass in his
 "hand, swearing, and denying God."

It is needless to make any reflexions upon this character, it must appear so thoroughly vicious ; and the more dangerous from all those extraordinary qualities both of mind and body which accompanied it, even the unhappy father pronounced it so in a son. And the Duke de Sully observes, that he was at once a miracle and a monster : it is therefore certain beyond the least shadow of doubt, that virtue does not consist in the possession of the greatest personal or external advantages, but in the right use and application of these, from a constant and pure intention. It is this only which properly excites the moral sentiment of esteem and approbation. Nor can the most shining abilities which the human nature is susceptible of, avert that infamy and contempt which is the natural portion of vice.

*If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shin'd ;
 The wisest, brightest, meanest, of mankind.*

THERE appears no occasion to use any farther direct arguments to undermine this chimerical fabric of virtue which we have been considering : the absurd consequences which it leads to, must equally expose its weakness. We shall mention but a few of them. The notion of useful and agreeable, adopted by our author, leads him to rank among the moral virtues not only the quali-
 ties

ties of the mind, but the properties of the body, beauty, strength, and just proportion: nay, even external things, dress, riches, and indeed, by a necessary consequence, pleasures of every kind. It would appear too serious to dispute the titles of these newly initiated virtues; but it may be worth while to remark, that, where our author introduces cleanliness into their number, p. 169, he makes the following extraordinary observation. "We may, says he, in this instance, (referring to cleanliness), seemingly so trivial, clearly discover the origin of moral distinctions, about which the learned have involved themselves in such mazes of perplexity and error." If the notion of virtue is to be brought down to so low a standard as that of cleanliness, the learned, and unlearned too, have indeed been involved in a very great error. We are told, that Heliogabulus, one of the wickedest monsters ever the sun beheld, used a suit of new clean cloaths every day, exquisitely rich and elegant. And the whole Roman empire groined under the taxes necessary to support that extravagance, and his other infinite profusion. Now, if we consider cleanliness and elegance of dress as a moral virtue, such was Heliogabulus's constant and daily application to the practice of this virtue, that one might be apt to think, the total estimation and full amount of it would turn out so high as to compensate all his other vices. The Romans, however, were involved, it seems, in the same error with the rest of mankind, and put him to death, as well for that extravagance as his other crimes. And, when

when his successor Alexander had reduced the public taxes, to the thirtieth part of what had been paid in his predecessor's time, his negligence of dress and exact œconomy were never thought to bring the least tash upon these illustrious virtues which adorned his character, and justly rendered him the darling of mankind.

THERE is another virtue which 'tis not easy to overlook, the quality of a good woman's man, according to the gross description our author gives of it, in his note, p. 135, decency will not allow us to view it in a full attitude. But, surely, this entire novice must have blushed at its first introduction into the moral assembly, had not modesty, at least as an attendant upon chastity, been previously dismissed. 'Twas well it was so, otherwise their meeting might have disturbed the harmony of the virtues. This virtue he represents as not so universal as other virtues; because it respects only the female sex. Perhaps, as he had deprived that sex of chastity, a virtue which they had been in possession of as far back as the memory and records of mankind can carry us, he thought it just, in place of it, to furnish them with this other virtue, which stands in a remarkable opposition to it. Whether he has made that sex a sufficient recompense, it is needless to determine; but this is certain, that he has paved the way to enrich mankind with the possession of a thousand virtues that were never once dreamt of before. For every minister of pleasure, even of the lowest kind, may put in his claim for virtue, and rise in his demands in proportion

portion as he can increase our sensual gratifications. Strange morality indeed ! But it is not confined to those functions common to us with the brutes ; it even extends itself to inanimate things ; so that the beauty of a flower, and the useful qualities of a plant, may assume the name of moral virtue. This consequence our author indeed, p. 74, 75, expressly denies ; but it will baffle all his subtilty to avoid it. His notion of virtue is founded upon the sentiment of utility ; but he observes, that, when man is the object of this sentiment, it is mixed with affection, esteem, and approbation ; this he is sensible, however, is not sufficient for a proper distinction ; because he allows, that we have a species of approbation attending even inanimate objects, he would therefore found the difference in the degree of approbation ; it is different, says he, from what is directed to beneficent magistrates or statesmen. This is indeed true ; because to act up to the character of a good magistrate implies a right intention, which, as has been observed, is a proper characteristic of virtue. But let us compare our liking and approbation of plants or flowers to the like sentiment directed to cleanliness and the other virtue last mentioned, and if there be any difference it must be to the advantage of those inanimate objects. Thus we are left to estimate the quantity of moral beauty and virtue which a fine flower or useful plant may be possessed of. One might have thought, that, as our author lays such stress upon sentiment, in searching into the principle of morality, some of his conclusions at least, so much offending

offending natural sentiment, might have raised a suspicion, that there was either some error in his principles, or that they were placed in a wrong light, and seen with a partial regard ; and thereby have occasioned some review or rectification of them. But the case is quite otherwise ; he appears fond of his imaginary discoveries, and unites his several conclusions into a short description of virtue.

“ VIRTUE, says he, p. 171, consists in the “ possession of qualities useful or agreeable to the “ person himself, or to others.” He seems here to value himself as the only person who, after so many ages spent in fruitless research, has at last discovered the true nature of virtue. I would willingly join him in this self-congratulation, and give him no disturbance in the enjoyment of his opinion, even whilst I thought it a dream ; but the importance of truth will not permit this in the present case. Cicero tells us, that there is nothing really useful or agreeable, but what is honest and virtuous ; but our author has so fully explained himself as to leave no room for equivocation. His definition of virtue will therefore appear plainly to be *felo de se*, and sufficient in itself to expose the weakness and absurdity of his whole scheme. He draws together four principles different from, and often opposite to, one another ; but points out no bond of union to establish a proper harmony among them, and to secure a regular train of effects.

His principles are, the qualities of useful and agreeable, and each of these diversified according to the different objects to which they are directed, ourselves

ourselves or others. With respect to the qualities themselves, he has not sufficiently limited their nature and extent: for example, with regard to the agreeable, he does not distinguish betwixt the moral sense, and the external senses, or perceptions of imagination, but he applies that quality to every sensible pleasure we are susceptible of. Further, he has laid down no certain rule to determine the preference in a competition betwixt the useful, and agreeable, he has left that entirely to taste and sentiment, which must operate irregularly, and vary its influence according to the mood and humour we happen to be in at the time. Both these observations may be illustrated from an instance which he himself has condescended on. He has plainly insinuated, as has been already observed, that adultery, by becoming agreeable; to what? to our external sense or imagination? to be sure; is, upon that very account, rendered a virtue: nay, that the agreeableness of that virtue, if I must call it so, may be so prevailing as to take place of justice and chastity, to both which it is opposite, altho' these are founded upon his other principle of utility. The very mention of these things abundantly discovers the extravagance and inconsistency of our author's principles. But this will appear still in a stronger light, when we consider the different objects to which those several qualities are directed, ourselves, and others. Which of these must we prefer? if we prefer ourselves, upon all occasions, sure we can never be deemed virtuous; if we prefer others, we at least neglect that cha-

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rafter of virtue which recommends what is useful and agreeable to ourselves. But why should we prefer others? from a common sentiment of humanity? such sentiment, however, does not exclude ourselves. But, be that as it will, why should a sentiment of humanity make us prefer others to ourselves? Such general sentiment is not near so strong, by our author's own admission, as those particular passions which direct to different objects as the sources of our most sensible pleasure. But it may be said, that, if we were so constituted, as that the principle of humanity was the source of our highest satisfaction, such constitution, as we are social creatures, would undoubtedly contribute to the greatest perfection of our happiness; and therefore, in our calm reflexions, this is what we must naturally wish and desire.

THIS indeed is true; but it is as certain, that such constitution is far from agreeing to the prevailing character of mankind. Where, then, shall we find proper countermotives to subdue the force of the selfish passions, and give an habitual ascendant to the social ones. Our author's scheme furnishes us with none; it points out no general sentiment arising from the beauty and order of the constitution, or from the happy effect resulting to virtue in the final issue of things, which might be of force sufficient to accomplish this great object of morality, *viz.* to subject the selfish passions to the general good: on the contrary, he talks of the moral differences as taking but a slender hold of the heart. "These moral differences,

"rences, says he, p. 100, have a considerable
"influence, and being sufficient at least for dis-
"course, serve all our purposes in company, in
"the pulpit, on the theatre, and in the schools."
Thus virtue is represented as a subject of talk and
declamation, but of very little force to influence
the heart and life. That province is resigned to
the passions, which must therefore rule without
controul. In which case, the sentiment of hu-
manity, which directs to the good of others,
must give way to those stronger passions which
engage in quite different pursuits. Thus that
part of the description of virtue which relates to
the good of others, is rendered ineffectual, when
private interest competes with it; whereby the
very essence of morality is destroyed.

FROM these few observations made upon the
foregoing specious description of virtue, it will ap-
pear, that, when examined to the bottom, it real-
ly contains repugnant principles; and that immedi-
ate self-love alone can decide the difference. Our
author's scheme of morality is, in effect, no other
than the antient scheme which excluded religion,
which Epicurus first reduced to some form, and
clothed with a tolerably decent dress; he refer-
red all to self-love and immediate enjoyment; but
he excluded the grosser pleasures of sense, and in-
troduced the virtues as subordinate ministers to
the happiness he proposed. Aristippus was bold-
er than he, and gave a full indulgence to all sen-
sual gratifications. which was indeed more natu-
ral and agreeable to their common principles.
The Cyrenaic philosophy, therefore, in fact, pre-
vailed.

veiled, tho' the name of Epicurus was, perhaps, for greater decency more generally retained. We have seen how much our author has enlarged the sphere of the virtues, and admitted almost every thing into their number; but he has excluded other qualities which had a much better title. We have already considered justice and chastity, and we shall now take some little notice of self-denial and humility. These virtues, in p. 174, he has banished to the monasteries with abundance of scorn and severe invective. But happy would the monks be, if they gave them a good reception; for they are the largest sources of virtue, and the most shining ornaments of the men of the world.

It is the province of self-denial to subdue the private affections; it is a noble virtue that stands opposite to all the selfish passions at once. It endeavours to moderate their violence, to check their indulgence, and, by a steady discipline, to reduce them to a proper subjection: and this it does, not from humour or caprice, but in order to attain the noblest of all purposes, that is, to secure to the social virtues the empire over the mind.

This representation of self-denial is sufficient to prove its excellence, but we shall confirm it from the examples of those who have made the greatest figure in life.

When Scevola put his right hand into the fire, this must be allowed to be an extraordinary instance of self-denial; yet this is an action, upon which the Roman writers think they can never bestow too great applause. Seneca's indignation
kindles,

kindles, if one should but insinuate, that Scevola would have been happier, if, instead of putting his hand into the fire, he had put it into his mistress's bosom.

How deliberate and determined, how heroic and illustrious was the conduct of Regulus! when he voluntarily exposed himself to the cruellest sufferings, rather than abandon justice, and forfeit his plighted faith. This extraordinary example of self-denial has been a constant subject of panegyric, nor is there any instance of Roman magnanimity, which Horace tho' an Epicurean more celebrates and admires. It is obvious to perceive, how examples of this kind might be multiplied; and therefore it is unnecessary to do this.

WE shall then proceed to consider a little the virtue of humility. This is indeed but a species of self-denial; for, as that stands opposed to all the passions in general, humility is peculiarly opposite to pride. If pride then be a vice, as it certainly is, humility must necessarily be a virtue. There is perhaps no vice in great life more hurtful to society than pride. When those who make the greatest figure in the cabinet, or the field, pay a greater regard to a false notion of honour, than to the true interest of their country, this is often the occasion of such losses to a whole nation, as no after industry, or expence can repair. And therefore we find, that no virtue sets a great character in such a beautiful point of light, as does humility.

WHEN the Athenians were deliberating, whether to engage in a war with the Macedonians, one of their orators used all his eloquence, to per-

suade them to war. Phocion was sensible of the danger to which this might expose his country, and therefore declared as warmly for peace; then, turning to the orator, said, this is my opinion, tho' I know, that, if we have war, I will be your master, and, if peace, you will be mine.

WE must equally love and admire the humble piety of Timoleon. By a series of great and successful operations, he had raised Sicily from the most deplorable condition to a state of the greatest tranquillity and happiness: and, upon the calm review of all, he gave thanks to God, says Plutarch, who, intending to bestow such a signal blessing upon the Sicilians, employed him as his instrument in so great a work.

AFTER the defeat of Hannibal, when the hard terms of peace, offered by the Romans, were debated in the senate of Carthage, they appeared so grievous to many of the young senators, that their pride of heart would not allow them to submit to them. But, on this occasion, Hannibal himself mortified his haughty spirit, wisely preferred the interest of his country, and persuaded them to agree to the terms proposed. And perhaps this humble conduct adds greater lustre to his character, than all his military achievements.

WHAT did Fabius Maximus suffer in his reputation? What ignominy and contempt was he brought under from the imputation of indolence, timidity and cowardice: yet to all this he patiently submitted, when he thought upon the danger that Rome was in, and, by neglecting his own character, he saved his country. And therefore
he

he is justly celebrated amongst the greatest patriots.

Non ponebat enim rumores ante salutem:

Unus qui nobis cunctando restituit rem.

So true it is what Solomon says, that before honour cometh humility.

WE have, by this time, pretty fully considered our author's scheme. We have seen to what a low standard he has reduced virtue, and how he has debased it by the admission of the meanest qualities, and the exclusion of some of the noblest, whereby it must indeed take but a slender hold of the heart, and be little regarded in the life, as he himself seems plainly to admit. Indeed no body can have a poorer opinion of the insufficiency of our author's principles than he himself has; for in the dialogue subjoined to his treatise, he contradicts his own scheme, weak as it is, and represents virtue not at all as founded upon nature, but as the casual and uncertain effect of the capricious humours, and customs of mankind. As we have already endeavoured to establish in nature a solid foundation for virtue, we shall need to bestow but a few reflexions upon some of the most material things thrown out by our author, in prosecution of this new theory.

He observes that, in some countries, certain actions have been deemed virtuous, or vicious, which, in other countries, have passed under the contrary denominations. He illustrates this by a detail of several particular examples; and from thence would seem to deduce the following conclusion, p. 237, that fashion, vogue, custom, and
law

law were the chief foundation of all moral determinations. Before we consider any of his particular examples, it may be proper to make one general observation, which may throw light upon the subject under view. That, supposing virtue to be founded in nature, the means, which, when not essentially connected with it, may yet be useful for its support and preservation; such means, I say, may be somewhat casual, and dependent on the different humours and customs of mankind. For example, suppose chastity, and modesty founded in nature, some practices may be thought useful to support them in some countries, which are disregarded in others, and this difference may arise from the diversity of climate, temper, or education. In one country it may be deemed immodest in a woman, to show her face in public, and, in another, not. In reality, it is so in neither. But, in the first, the imputation of immodesty relates not so much to the action itself, as to the influence it may be supposed to have on the real forfeiture of virtue. In this view, many different customs are adopted by different nations, as useful to the same end, to the same virtue, in the nature of which they are perfectly agreed.

AND, tho' the customs themselves may receive the moral denomination from the virtue to which they relate, yet this is but improper, and if, thro' any change of circumstances, they should cease to have such relation, the moral denomination is laid aside.

THUS, if it is found useful to preserve a woman's chastity, that she should veil her face in public, that custom is received, and the contrary deemed

deemed immodest. But if further experience from any change of circumstances shall convince us, that a woman may appear in public unveiled without endangering her chastity; such custom is laid aside, and the contrary practice is no longer deemed immodest. Thus, by making a proper distinction betwixt the end and the means, we may account for a great part of the diversity of moral denominations in different countries, without supposing any difference in their sentiments with regard to virtue as it really is in itself. But further, even in those cases, where there may seem to be a real difference of sentiment with regard to virtue itself, if the matter is carefully attended to, such difference will, in a great measure, disappear, or be diminished. Let us consider the famous case of Brutus as one of the principal conspirators concerned in the death of Cesar. That action, says our author, was approved by the antients; particularly the Athenians, as truly noble and virtuous; and yet to us it must appear a barbarous assassination aggravated by the guilt of perjury and ingratitude. But, to explain this, it is to be considered, that, when we pass judgment upon a complex case, we are often tempted to overlook certain circumstances, and form our opinion only upon that part of the action which more immediately strikes us. Thus the Athenians might not have known, or at least overlooked the forementioned aggravating circumstances, (supposing them true), and attended only to the lustre of that virtue with which they were peculiarly affected; that is, the generous purpose of Brutus hazarding his life
to

to save his country; a purpose which friendship itself could not suppress. That this was laudable in Brutus cannot be doubted: and it was this alone that engaged the admiration of the Athenians. For no man can imagine, that that wise people should believe perjury, treachery and ingratitude not to be criminal in their own nature, but to derive their turpitude only from custom and opinion. We shall consider another example, adduced by our author, and that is adultery. He admits that, among the Athenians, it was always reckoned amongst the worst of crimes. But, in France, says he, p. 233, it is in the highest vogue and esteem, and practised by every man of education, and tamely allowed by every man else.

IN France, therefore, must every person, whom a happy education has improved into a man of gallantry, and every good-natured husband as such, be deemed virtuous? We shall endeavour to preserve our gravity by making this dull observation, that the great majority of the people of France, whose low education has not refined their sentiments to such a taste, will probably, in consequence of the religion and laws of their country, think in a very different manner. And therefore, even in France, adultery must be a vice.

ACCORDING to our author's notions, it must be a vice among those latter people, because they think it so; but a virtue among folks of fashion, because it is agreeable to them. Such an opinion leads to this unavoidable consequence, that whatever any set of men, or even any individual person,

person, may think fit to do, however criminal in itself, must yet be deemed a virtue; because it is immediately agreeable to those who practise it.

BUT let us suppose that a whole nation should universally countenance a bad practice, this never would alter the nature of things, nor give sanction to vice. *Quod si populorum jussis, (says Cicero, de legibus), si principum decretis, si sententiis judicum jura constituerentur, jus esset latrocinari, jus adulterari, jus testamenta falsa supponere, si hæc suffragiis, aut scitis multitudinis, probarentur.*

BUT so far are the depraved customs of the multitude, or even the practices of the great from being the just standard of morality, that virtue shines forth with the greater lustre from amidst bad practices; and even an universal corruption renders it the more conspicuous.

THE multitude of examples could never sanctify venality and injustice in the Roman senate; but, on the contrary, spread a greater glory upon the integrity of Cato. When we compare the laws and customs of one nation with those of another, it must surely be by some standard in nature, independent of those customs, that the preference is determined. This must also be the case, when we consider the changes and revolutions of one and the same nation. We justly praise the virtue of the antient Romans, in many respects: but that people sunk at last into a total corruption of manners. In the gradual progression from one extreme to another, vice might indeed be denominated so, till it became pretty general. But then the certain way to sanctify vice upon our author's

thor's scheme, would be to run into the practice of it, by a general consent; for then it would agree to what is made the standard of virtue, *viz.* custom and usage: and, for the same reason, virtue, as being now neglected, must lose its former denomination; and, as it is changed into the nature, it must also carry the name of vice.

THESE things appear glaringly absurd, even to the vicious themselves; for, in spite of all their bad practices, virtue, placed in a proper light, extorts praises from them whether they will or not. Our author himself, not very constant in his opinions, would seem to make an exception of certain virtues, and to suppose them so founded in the nature of things, as that all nations must agree in them. These, as he enumerates them, in p. 238, are, good sense, knowledge, wit, eloquence, humanity, fidelity, truth, justice, courage, temperance, constancy, dignity of mind. In these, he says, the French and Athenians would certainly concur. With regard to the first four of these, we have already shown, that they are not moral virtues in themselves, but may be misapplied to the worst of purposes. We have also considered in what respect courage is a moral virtue, nor need we repeat what has already been fully said with regard to our author's mistaken notions of justice, and its branches, truth, and fidelity. Humanity and temperance must indeed be allowed to be moral virtues; but they are established upon a firmer foundation than vogue and fashion, or the practices and consent
of

of nations. Were it otherwise, even humanity itself would have but a slender support. For, not to mention instances of unnatural cruelty, generally practised by certain barbarous nations, even those people who have been distinguished for their genius, and the improvement of arts and sciences, have, on many occasions, been no less remarkable for the most shocking excesses of inhumanity. The Romans, toward the end of their commonwealth, afford us too convincing a proof of this; and the French and Athenians cannot always clear themselves from the same charge. 'Tis scarce needful to mention constancy and dignity of mind; because these are qualities which previously suppose the reality of virtue; for constancy, in a bad measure, could only be accounted a vicious obstinacy, and an imaginary sense of worth, founded upon qualities destitute of virtue, deserves no better name than pride or vain conceit.

AFTER what has been said, 'tis needless to make any farther reflexions upon the weakness and inconsistency of our author's scheme; it is altogether violent and affected, and his purpose would seem to be to subject nature to the fickle opinions of mankind, *ut hominum suffragiis rerum natura vertatur*, as Cicero, in the last mentioned place, elegantly expresses it.

VIRTUE is that conduct which, from a deliberate intention, pursues the good of others. The good of others is abundantly determined by the natural wants and just desires of mankind; or if, in certain circumstances, this should be doubt-

M ful;

ful; yet, if we preserve a right intention, the soul of virtue will still remain. The motive to virtue arises from a sense of its usefulness, of its moral beauty and excellence, and its proper obligation is founded in a sense of duty, which plainly relates to, and can only be fully supported by a principle and sentiment of piety and religion. In this view, virtue must appear to be the peculiar care of the Deity, the natural instrument to facilitate the improvement of his wise and good designs: and therefore we must ever consider virtue as that happy bond which unites private and public good, which gives us an enlargement of mind, and persuades us, that, in pursuing the good of others, we most effectually consult our own proper happiness. 'Tis probably the concurrence of all those circumstances which finishes the beauty of virtue, and gives it such a resistless power over the heart. And, if we should not be able, with exactness, to explain the cause, yet is the effect not the less certain. It is what we are intimately conscious of, and sensibly feel within our own breasts. Nothing strikes us more, in our calm reflexions, than the moral species; and we never can set virtue in too illustrious a point of light.

LUCAN makes virtue the temple in which God peculiarly delights to dwell.

*Esse Dei sedes, nisi terra, et pontus, et aer,
Et cælum, et virtus.*

PERSIUS

PERSIUS makes virtue and vice respectively the essential ingredients of heaven and hell.

*Summe pater divum, sævos punire tyrannos,
Haud alia ratione velis.
Virtutem videant, intabescantque reliqua.*

NAY, we are naturally apt to catch the enthusiasm of Juvenal, when he says ;

Summum crede nefas, animam preferre pudori.

BUT it is not here intended to retail these beautiful encomiums which the philosophers have made upon virtue. From its direct and proper tendency to promote the happiness of mankind, its excellence must appear in the strongest light, and by those marks of honour and authority, with which the Deity has invested it, its obligation is rendered sacred and inviolable.

S E C T. V.

Of R E L I G I O N.

MAN is a creature inconsiderable in himself, but capable of the highest improvement; endued with large capacities and strong desires of happiness; but, having few resources within himself. Suppose a man, existing by himself, and quite cut off from the knowledge or perception of all other beings, and every part of nature, how compleatly miserable must he be? In such a solitary, dark, and gloomy state suppose the beauty, lighted up in the natural world, to break in upon his mind, what joy and delight must thence be communicated to his senses and imagination? he must still desire a more noble and permanent satisfaction, from the mental pleasures of wisdom and truth, and from the moral exercise of goodness, of friendship, and kind affection which give the sweetest and most exalted relish to the pleasing intercourses of society. But all this is far from being sufficient to complete the happiness of man. He still feels abundance of wants and weaknesses within himself. He needs a proper security for the permanency and stability of what he possesses. And his mind, ever improving in its faculties, enlarges its prospect of happiness, both as to degree and

and duration, and dissatisfied with its present acquisitions, still pursues some nobler species of good, without being able to assign any bounds to the increasing influence of these natural desires. The smallest reflexion must convince us, that this is the nature of man, and if this be so, it must prove; at the same time, that religion is strongly founded in nature. For what can be more desirable, more agreeable to the nature of man, as above delineated, than that there should be a supreme Being whose power can supply all his wants, and satisfy his most extensive desires; and whose goodness can give him full security of the permanent possession of bliss. 'Tis this consideration alone that establishes in the nature of things a counterpart to the proper nature of man, that maintains a just harmony and correspondence betwixt them, and thereby prevents the faculties and desires of the human mind from being fruitless and abortive, in contradiction to the general analogy of nature.

WE do not here intend, however proper it might be, to point out the noble sentiments, the peculiar pleasures which religion inspires, and their happy influence upon the social virtues. This many of the antient philosophers have done, of which Plato has given us a beautiful specimen in his Symposium.

BUT, in regard we have considered religion as a necessary principle to complete the nature, and perfect the obligation, of morality, it will be proper to remove the objections made by our author against this principle.

IN p. 250 and the subsequent pages, he plainly supposes religion, which he is pleased commonly to denote by the name of superstition, to be an unnatural, and artificial principle, a principle which with the antients was little regarded, did not operate upon their conduct, or influence them in the common affairs of life, but was limited, and confined to their temples. Nay, he seems even to consider it, as opposite to the natural principles of morality, and tending to prevent the exertion, and display of our virtuous inclinations.

WE have already hinted, how strongly religion is founded in nature, and shall only add another general consideration tending to prove the same point, as Mr. Hutchinson delivers it in the following paragraph.

“ UNDER this head of our internal senses, says he, we must observe one natural effect of it, that it leads us into apprehensions of a Deity. Grandeur, beauty, order, harmony, where-ever they occur, raise an opinion of a mind, of design, and wisdom. Every thing great, regular, or proportioned excites veneration, either toward itself, if we imagine it animated, if not animated, toward some apprehended cause. No determination of our mind is more natural than this, no effect more universal. One has better reason to deny the inclination between the sexes to be natural, than a disposition in mankind to religion.”

IT is not our present purpose to enlarge upon these abstract arguments. Our principal intention is, to consider, how far in fact religion appears
to

to have had the force of a natural and universal principle, this being what our author seems chiefly to have in view. As, in establishing a matter of fact, authorities must be of great weight, we shall begin with mentioning a few of them.

To prove the natural, and universal influence of religion upon mankind, *Ælian*, lib. ii. cap. 31. expresses himself in the following manner. "Who
" would not praise the wisdom of the Barbarians ;
" for none of them were ever perverted into Athe-
" ism ; none of them ever doubted of the exist-
" ence of the gods, or whether they concerned
" themselves with human affairs. None of the
" Indians, Celtæ, or Egyptians ever espoused such
" an impious opinion, as *Diogenes*, *Epicurus*, and
" a few more (whom he there mentions.) " On the
" contrary, says he, they all assert the existence,
" and providence of the gods, and, in the firm
" faith of this, they acknowledge their depen-
" dence upon the gods, and pay to them divine
" honours", in the various methods which he par-
ticularly mentions. What *Xenophon* says to
the same purpose in his *Symposium* is still more
remarkable. He there introduces *Hermogenes*
speaking in the following manner. " It is ex-
" tremely evident, that both Greeks and Barba-
" rians believe that the gods know all things pre-
" sent and to come. Every city, every nation
" consults the gods by divination, what they
" ought to do, and what they should decline : and
" we are all fully convinced, that they can do to
" us either good, or ill. In consequence of this,
" all mankind beseech them to avert ill, and
" grant

“grant them what is good. Those gods, who
 “are thus infinite in wisdom and power, are so
 “much my friends, and have such a concern a-
 “bout me, that they never forget me by night,
 “or by day, where-ever I go, or whatever I do.
 “And, because they foreknow every future event,
 “by sending angels, voices dreams, and birds,
 “they warn me what I should do, and what I
 “should forbear. And, when I regard their ad-
 “monitions, I always find my account in it;
 “but, if I neglect them, I suffer for it. All this is
 “extremely reasonable, says Socrates; but one
 “thing I would gladly know by what manner of
 “service and devotion it is, that you make them
 “so much your friends. I assure you, replied
 “Hermogenes, I do this at a very easy rate. I
 “praise them, which costs me nothing; and,
 “when I give them any thing, it is but part of
 “what I before received from them: I talk of
 “them always with reverence; and, when I
 “call upon them to witness my promises, I am
 “strictly conscientious in the performance of
 “them. Certainly, says Socrates, since, by
 “these means, you procure the friendship of the
 “gods, they must delight in virtue.”

I shall quote one passage more from Cicero's
 2d book of laws, where he delivers his senti-
 ments somewhat more philosophically.

THAT great philosopher, in imitation of Plato,
 establishes a solid foundation of his laws in a just
 sense of religion, and expresses himself in the fol-
 lowing manner; *Sit igitur hoc jam a principio per-*
suasum civibus, &c. that is, “Let all the citizens
 “be

“ be previously persuaded of this, that the gods
“ are lords and governors of this universe ; and
“ that all things are conducted by their authority
“ and influence ; that they are the greatest bene-
“ factors of mankind ; that they see the intenti-
“ ons of mens hearts, and know the sincerity of
“ their religion, and make a proper difference
“ betwixt the pious and impious. When the
“ minds of men are influenced by such princi-
“ ples, they will be the more susceptible of the im-
“ pressions of truth and goodness. For what
“ truth can be more certain than this, that none
“ ought to be so foolishly arrogant as to believe,
“ that he himself is possessed of reason and un-
“ derstanding ; and yet that the great whole, this
“ regular universe, is devoid of it. And that per-
“ son who can observe the beautiful order of the
“ stars, the grateful vicissitude of night and day, the
“ agreeable temperament of the seasons, who con-
“ siders all the blessings and comforts that earth
“ produces, without gratitude to the great disposer
“ of all things, deserves to have his name struck
“ off from the list of human kind. Further, since
“ all things, endued with reason, are better
“ than those which are destitute of it, and it
“ would be absurd and impious to affirm, that
“ any poor individual is better than the uni-
“ versal nature of things, it must be a necessary
“ consequence, that this universal nature is go-
“ verned by intelligence. And can any person
“ doubt of the usefulness and advantage of such
“ opinions, who considers, how many things are
“ confirmed by an oath, how sacred those trea-
“ ties.

“ ties are which are ratified by religion, and how
“ many men are with-held from wickedness from
“ the apprehension of divine vengeance, who con-
“ sider how sacred and inviolate that society must
“ be, which is maintained by the authority of the
“ gods, the witnesses and judges of our conduct.”
I shall only observe further, from this excellent
author, that, in his first book of laws, having
remarked, that, of all animals, man alone is ca-
pable of any knowledge of God. “ And of men,
“ says he, there is no nation so rude and barba-
“ rous, but who, whatever wrong notions they
“ may form of God, are yet still persuaded of
“ this truth, that they ought to acknowledge a
“ God. Hence it is, that man who knows, and,
“ as it were, remembers his own original, must
“ be led to the acknowledgment of a Deity.”

If any thing can give additional weight to
such strong proofs of this important truth, that
religion is a natural principle, it must be the te-
stimony of the Epicureans themselves, men who,
from passion, prejudice, and the prevailing fa-
shion of the times, were induced to doubt, or
deny a divine providence. Such were Horace,
and Virgil, who lived in a dissolute age, when
impiety was in vogue. When these, therefore,
speak out their natural sentiments, their testimo-
ny must be so much the more unexceptionable.
These we shall examine with our usual brevity.

HORACE, in spite of the impiety of his affected
philosophy, often celebrates the praises of the
gods in a just and beautiful manner; he com-
mends that purity and uprightness with which

we

we should approach their altars ; he affirms, that a man of innocence and integrity of life, is the peculiar object of the divine care, and needs no arms to repel the greatest dangers, other than the protection of Providence. This is the plain meaning of that beautiful ode,

*Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus,
Non eget Mauri jaculis, &c.*

IN fine, he seriously warns his countrymen against the neglect of religion ; and, to this cause, imputes all the calamities they met with. He assures them, that they may expect to govern the nations, upon this condition only, that they themselves duely acknowledge their constant subjection to the gods.

*Dis te minorem quod geris, imperas ;
Hinc omne principium, huc refer exitum.*

NAY, when he calmly considers the Atheism of Epicurus, he is sensible of his error ; and, with great propriety, calls it, *insaniens sapientia*, a philosophy that deserves the name of madness.

WITH regard to Virgil, it is needless to say much ; because it is the general design of his poem, in the character of Æneas, to recommend piety to a court, at once the most dissolute, and the most polite. He is always careful to maintain the due honour of religion, and thinks the particular acts of it becoming the highest characters in life. Of this we have a remarkable example in that pious prayer, which he puts in Dido's mouth, after the entertainment she gave to
the

the Trojan chiefs : and, upon all proper occasions, he still preserves the same *décorum*.

BUT what we shall further observe, as most material for our present purpose, is, that Virgil is at pains expressly to give us the character of an Atheist, in the person of Mezentius. That prince is introduced in the seventh book of the *Æneids*, as an avowed despiser of the gods.

Contemptor divum Mezentius.

AND, in the tenth book, he is made to acknowledge no other god, but his own right hand, and the dart which it held.

Dextra mihi deus, et telum quod missile libro.

AND afterwards he gives a bold defiance to all the gods at once.

Nec mortem horremus, nec divum parcimus ulli.

OUR curiosity must no doubt be awakened to know in what a moral light, with regard to men, this impious prince is represented by so judicious a poet : and it will appear, that his character is perhaps the most wicked and abandoned that we meet with in that whole poem. It is true, Virgil allows him abundance of courage, and a strong degree of paternal affection ; but, at the same time, he represents him as a most cruel and oppressive tyrant, whom his subjects dethroned for his insupportable crimes, and still pursued where-ever he went, with an unrelenting hate. And he pathetically deplores the unhappy condition of the virtuous Lausus, for having been the son of
such

such an infamous father. Thus the Epicureans themselves, even those of them who were most distinguished for a true judgment, and just sentiments, when yielding to the natural dictates of their hearts, have given ample testimony in favours of religion, in spite of their affected prejudices; so prevailing is the force of nature, and so strongly must religion be founded in nature.

BUT further, to confirm this important truth, we shall make a few more particular observations upon its actual influence on mankind.

THAT the antients had religion in the highest honour and esteem; that they worshipped and acknowledged the gods almost upon every occasion, by a variety of rites and ceremonies, often very magnificent and expensive, is a matter of fact, not questioned. But our author insinuates, that they left their religion behind them in the temples; and that it had no influence on their lives. To what purpose, then, was all that concern which they discovered with regard to religious institutions? Why did religion make so great a part of their laws, enter so deeply into every affair of moment, and mix itself so universally with all their customs? 'Tis impossible to account for this but upon supposition of the natural tendency of religion, to influence the manners and conduct of mankind.

IN fact, no obligation was found of force to secure the faith, and bind the consciences of men, equal to that of religion. Hence oaths were devised to bind magistrates to the faithful discharge of their duty; and as well to secure private contracts, as to strengthen public treaties. Thus, a simple regard to faith and justice was consider-

ed but as a slender tye, in comparison of the immediate impressions of religion. But the man, who perjured himself, was thought infamous and profligate to the last degree, and considered as liable to the severest torments in hell.

To avoid too great an excursion into so large a subject, we shall shortly consider the influence which religion had upon the antient Romans. Machiavel, in his discourse on Livy, tells us, that, for several ages together, never was the fear of God more eminently conspicuous than in that republic. And, to this principle, he ascribes all their good laws, their prosperity and greatness. Pliny, in the beginning of his panegyric, observes, that it was a wise and pious institution of their ancestors, to engage in no business without first offering up their prayers to the gods: for they thought, says he, that they could not go about any thing in a right manner, or promise upon suitable success, without duly honouring the gods; and thereby obtaining their aid and assistance. And Cicero, in his oration, *de aruspicum responsis*, insinuates, that the Romans did not gain the empire of the world, because of their superiority to other nations, in number, strength, wisdom, or learning, but because they excelled them all in piety and religion, in that wisdom which subjected them to the authority and government of the immortal gods. His words are so remarkable that I shall here transcribe them. *Quam volumus licet, patres conscripti, nos amemus; tamen nec numero Hispanos, nec robore Gallos, nec calliditate Pœnos, nec artibus Græcos; nec denique hoc ipso hujus gentis, et terræ domestico*

domestico natiwoque sensu Italos et Latinos ; sed pietate ac religione atque hac una sapientia quod deorum immortalium numine omnia regi gubernarique perspeximus, omnes gentes nationesque superavimus.

To these we shall add the authority of Livy, who gives us a remarkable example of the truth of this observation. When Herdonius, at the head of a considerable number of slaves and exiles, had surpris'd the capitol, and brought the city into the utmost danger ; so great were the animosities betwixt the Patricians and Plebeians, that these last were, with difficulty, perswaded, by Valerius the Consul, to take-up arms in this dangerous juncture. Valerius attacked the capitol ; the attack succeeded, tho' the Consul perished in it. Quinctius Cincinnatus was chosen in his place, a mortal enemy to the Tribunes. In order to divert their domestic broils, Quinctius propos'd to take the field with an army ; the Tribunes ask'd him, how he could expect to make any levies ? he answer'd, he had no occasion for a levy, he would summon those soldiers who had been sworn to Valerius, and had not been loos'd from their military oath. The Tribunes repli'd, that they were not bound by that oath ; for they had not taken it to him. Livy observes, that this cavilling of the Tribunes had no effect upon the people ; and adds, in commendation of the Romans of that time, " The neglect of the gods, " which now prevails, was not known in that " age ; men did not then explain oaths and laws " as best suited their interest, but made these the " strict rule of their conduct and behaviour."

Hardly can we imagine a stronger instance of regard to an oath than this : for those Romans, who were ready to sacrifice even their city, and every thing that was dear to them, to their intestine feuds, never hesitated to subject all these to the superior dictates of religion. 'Tis true, the influence of religion may decay, as it afterwards did at Rome ; but that is no proof of the natural weakness of this principle, where it prevails in any just degree, but only, that men may be without it.

FROM the several reflexions we have already made, it must appear, that a just sense of religion is a strong, natural, and universal principle, and immediately tends to excite us to virtue, and the practice of our duty. Nay, this last must be true, if we should even suppose religion to be a device of politicians ; for this must be the very reason of such device, that they may the more effectually determine men to the practice of their duty. Nothing therefore, in every view, can be wiser in the supreme magistrate, or more dutiful in every private subject, than not only to secure religion from contempt, but to maintain it in just veneration, and esteem.

OUR author however seems not at all sensible of this ; he still endeavours to discover its weakness, by condescending on particular instances. For this purpose, he gives us a curious contrast of the characters of Diogenes the Cynic, and Mr. Pascal, much to the disadvantage of the latter. Diogenes indeed was a professed atheist : and if our author thinks, it tends any way to his praise, that, after, in his fancy, he had banished God from

from heaven, he lived as an independent being, and considered himself as a God, within his own tub. If our author thinks in this manner, I say, 'tis an opinion so very absurd, that it would be no small absurdity to go about to dispute it. With regard to Diogenes's whimsical and absurd philosophy, I am in no concern about it; and shall dismiss him, as very unworthy of the company he is placed in, after having observed, that he was a perpetual exile from his own country, for the crime of false coinage, and that his character consisted chiefly of these ingredients, impiety, pride, impudence, and ill-nature, which justly exposed him to the odium of mankind, and brought upon the sect, of which he was a leader, the epithet of cynic or dog-like. As for Mr. Pascal, that he was devoted to the church of Rome is true, nor will I dissemble, that his character contracted some blemishes upon that account, yet it would be extremely hard to make no allowances for human infirmity, but to expect that men should be altogether free of errors, or faults. Our author's scheme of virtue does not, sure, intitle him to make so high a demand. Mr. Pascal's faults however were but like spots in the sun. He possessed the essentials of religion, and those he applied to the noblest improvements in virtue. If our author blames him for his constant dependence on God for his happiness, it must surely be, because he forgets what kind of a creature man is. But it seems, he endeavoured to be indifferent about his relations, and to love, and speak well of his enemies. The first is an insinuation incompatible with Mr. Pascal's

admirable discernment; for, as it was his religion that taught him to love his enemies, he was too wise not to know that the same religion obliged him to have a proper regard for his relations; and surely the one duty was as easy as the other. Our author seems to allow Mr. Pascal this virtue of love to enemies, as if it were an unnatural one; but as it is, in some measure, peculiar to Christianity, it entirely suits its complexion: for that religion represents men not only as brethren, but as designed for the happiest union in an eternal bond of friendship. If we consider men in this light, it must appear absurd and monstrous in them to treat one another as enemies, for trifling differences that are so soon to be removed. Mr. Pascal's contemplative turn, and bad state of health, made him chuse retirement: the last he sustained with true Christian fortitude, and the first gave him an occasion to do greater services to mankind, than the busiest scenes of most other men could effect. His provincial letters must do honour to the human understanding; and equally prove, that he knew virtue, and could bravely practise it. Our author, however, seems to hint, that Pascal might have been virtuous, if he had not been religious. Strange insinuation! as if religion, like the plague, corrupted every thing it approached. What! must the most exalted genius, the justest discernment, the greatest integrity and purity of manners, the bravest self-exposure in defence of virtue; must all these forfeit their claim to the name of virtue, because conjoined with, and animated by, the most sincere piety? I am willing
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tion, with regard to the King, as Mentor is with respect to Telemaque. It may be previously observed, that the only blemish Voltaire affixes upon his character, arises from his supposed heresy; but in this perhaps he will scarcely be thought to have been in earnest.

IN his first canto, where he supposes Henry IV. setting out for England to solicit the assistance of Queen Elizabeth, he makes Mornay his sole companion, and thus represents him:

Mornay's his sole companion, his best friend,
His confidant, but not his flatterer,
Support, too virtuous, on error's side,
Who, fam'd alike for prudence and for zeal,
With like affection serves his church, and
France,
Censor of courtiers, but at court beloved,
Vow'd enemy of Rome, at Rome esteem'd.

IN the description he gives of an assault upon Paris, in his sixth canto, he exerts all his genius to increase the horrors of the fight, and indeed represents Henry the Great in the attitude of a true hero; and then gives the following account of Mornay:

Mornay, among these rapid floods of flame,
Grave, but intrepid, mingles with the war,
Incapable of fury and of fear,
Deaf to the roar of cannons and of bombs,
And calm amidst the tempest of the fight,
He looks on battles with a Stoic's eye
As necessary flails of wrathful skies,

Like

Like a philosopher, where honour guides
He marches, and condemning fights, avoids
No danger, pities Henry, and attends.

He shows him, in the same sublime elevation in
the dreadful description he gives of the battle of
Ivry, in his third canto :

The faithful Mornay follows him serene,
And, calm amidst the tempest of the war,
Waits on, and watches o'er him through the
field,

Like his good genius on that dreadful day,
See there, says he, that shock'd battalion flies
Mayne's troops are in arrest near yonder wood,
Aumale advances, let us meet his march.
Thus he assists him in the fight, and guards,
More than one blow, while yet he speaks, wards
off,

But, Stoical, will not permit his hand
To slay, or shew the stain of human blood,
His soul is only for his King concerned,
He, only to defend him, draws his sword ;
Combats he hates, but knows not what is fear,
Dares death, and never gives the death he
dares.

It may be observed, that the poet strains the
character a little here ; for Mornay fought like
other men. But the fiction has this just founda-
tion, that Mornay, amidst the unavoidable cala-
mities of war, exerted all that charity and huma-
nity, with which his religion inspired him, to make
these calamities as little felt, and to mitigate
them

them as much as was possible. In the ninth canto, upon occasion of a very delicate conjuncture, the character of Mornay is represented in a variety of very striking and beautiful lights. After the battle of Ivry, the King privately left the camp, to indulge his passion for his favourite mistress Gabrielle de Estrée. The genius of France, alarmed at this misconduct, and the fatal effects it was like to produce, is represented as descending from heaven in order to avert the impending danger.

Earth, he with eyes inquisitive, survey'd,
To find a sage to minister his will;
He search'd not gloomy huts, nor cells rever'd
For study, silence, and affected fast,
He speeds to Ivry, and, amidst the rage,
And riot of licentious conquering troops,
Watchful o'er France, this angel first his flight
Divine, among the tents of Calvin's sons,
To Mornay he addresses.

AND, soon after, gives him the following character.

A friend discreet, philosopher severe,
Mornay, at once, knew to reprove and please
More than his lessons, his example taught;
He knew no loves but solid virtues; toil
To him was pleasure, and fatigues, delights:
Firm was his foot on precipices wild;
Not the court air a soft infectious breath
E'er chang'd or touch'd his purity of mind.
Fair Arethusa thus her happy waves
To wand'ring Amphinrite's bosom rolls,

Her

Her crystal waters, pure as at her spring,
Corruption never from the sea receive.

Soon generous Mornay, wisdom's self his guide,
Departs, and to these woods enchanted flies.

THEN the poet gives a fine description of the beautiful retreat where the two lovers were concealed, represents love as full of indignation at the sight of Mornay, but impotent to hurt him. He describes the King's confusion mixed with veneration of that great man.

Ill had another taken Mornay's care ;
For few in faults love witnesses, and least
In faults of love. Dear friend, says Henry,
come ;

Thy prince's heart's still worthy thee, 'tis done.

MORNAY answers him with dignity and respect, and concludes with great delicacy :

Who knows not love is happy, who subdues
Illustrious.

THEN the King is represented, as distracted betwixt love, and virtue, Gabriele, and Mornay : the last however prevails.

Mornay, whose stubborn virtue nought could
bend,

Draws after him the King, still loth to leave
These dear abodes, but still more loth to stay.

THESE lineaments of such illustrious virtue, tho' under no small disadvantage from the translation, are yet sufficient to raise a high idea of that character,

rafter, which was the object of the esteem, love, and admiration of mankind.

AND this must afford an argument decisive of the point in issue. But I cannot quit this subject, without first doing justice to the heathen world.

THAT Socrates was a man of the most distinguished virtue, will readily be allowed. That his exalted virtue was chiefly founded upon a religious principle; of this perhaps a proof may be demanded. We shall then endeavour to prove this, by the testimony of two witnesses, in every respect perfectly qualified: I mean, Xenophon, and Plato. They were both his constant hearers, intimately acquainted with his life, and thoroughly instructed in his principles. They were persons eminent for wisdom, and great abilities, and made an illustrious figure in the public world. The first gain'd an immortal name from his military conduct; the other was respected as a legislator, by many states of Greece. The conversation of both was courted by the greatest men of the age. The first particularly lived in intimate friendship with Agesilaus, the illustrious King of Sparta; and the other with Dion, the generous deliverer of ingrateful Syracuse. We shall then begin with Xenophon's testimony.

THE Athenian fleet, under the conduct of ten admirals, gained a considerable victory at Arginusæ over the fleet of Sparta, having destroy'd seventy of the enemies galleys, with the loss only of twelve of their own. Soon thereafter, six of these admirals, who happened to be at Athens, were, from pure envy, and by wicked practices, brought under

under the odium of the people : and an accusation, upon groundless pretences, was proposed to be carried on against them, without allowing them the legal forms of self-defence. This matter was remitted to the senate of five hundred. The senate, intimidated by the angry spirits of the people, prepared a decree contrary to law, with regard to the form of trial. However, when the decree came to be read in an assembly of the people, the presidents of the senate, (being ten in number, and of whom Socrates was first president) firmly opposed its execution, sensible of its gross injustice. But this had no other effect, than to increase the rage, and menaces of the people, to which the whole senators gave way through fear, except Socrates alone. He boldly declared, that he never would consent to any thing, but what was agreeable to law : and, by this conduct, never too much to be admired, his hands were pure from the blood of these innocent, and brave men ; which afterwards brought the Athenians under the deepest remorse. Xenophon gives us the foregoing account in his Greek history, and, in his *Memorabilia*, he explains the reason of this heroic instance of justice : Socrates, says he, had taken an oath, always to give his opinion agreeable to law.

AND Socrates believed, that the Gods were every where present, knew all our words and actions, and even perceived the thoughts of our hearts. And he afterwards adds, that, in his whole behaviour, he ever expressed the greatest regard to religion.

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WE shall next shortly consider, how far Plato agrees with this account. In his *Apology*, he introduces Socrates explaining to his judges his usefully philosophic manner of life, and he tells them, that he considers it as the province assigned him by heaven, and declares, that he was resolved to adhere to it, tho' in that service of God, he should be reduced to the greatest poverty. He afterwards adds, that, if his judges would acquit him, upon promise to desert this station, he would not purchase life upon such terms; for, that he was determined rather to obey God than them. In the several battles in which I fought, says Socrates, I kept the rank assigned me by my commanding officers, with as much fidelity as any of my fellow-citizens, in defiance of all danger: and how then should the fear of death induce me to abandon that post, which God himself has assigned me? Whether death be an evil, I know not; but, that to disobey God is ill, I certainly know.

IN *Crito*, Socrates is at great pains to persuade his disciples to regulate their lives, not according to the customs, and opinions of the multitude, but according to the will of that being who is truth itself, and whom we ought to fear and reverence more than all other beings beside, and whom if we forsake, we will certainly be led into vice.

IN *Phædo*, Socrates draws this beautiful inference from the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which he had been establishing: if then, says he, my friends, the soul is immortal, it must claim our greatest care and concern, not so much with regard to the present life, as to its future and eternal

nal existence: and there is no possibility of securing its happiness hereafter, but by studying now to make the greatest improvements in wisdom, and virtue.

'Tis needless to quote any more passages; from what has been already said, the proof of what was undertaken must appear compleat.

If we shall now calmly reflect upon the preceding reasonings and observations, whether we consider the matter in a more abstracted view, or as supported and ascertained by the universal sentiments and experience of mankind, we must be convinced that religion is a strong and natural principle. And how can it be otherwise, since it happily agrees with what is excellent in our nature, and only counterworks what is distempered and wrong. If we are disposed to do justice, or to shew mercy, religion will applaud and inspire us too. But, if we prefer injustice and cruelty, it will indeed oppose us there, and give eternal disturbance.

RELIGION denies none of the innocent pleasures of life, but improves them all with the addition of gratitude to their bountiful author. Yet, if we too keenly pursue the pleasures of sense, religion will check our career, and put us in mind, that it is more agreeable to our nature, as social creatures, to prefer the pleasures of virtue. Religion, therefore, only thwarts and discourages vice; but, at the same time, it countenances and cherishes virtue. If virtue, then, be natural, or if it be a just and proper improvement in man, religion must necessarily be so too.

IF nature requires a proper object and support for those strong passions, unlimited desires, and elevated sentiments, which are planted in the human breast, then religion, which alone can supply these, must be natural, and even necessary, to a creature of such a peculiar and so noble a make as man.



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CONCLUSION.

THE picture of virtue, which our author has drawn, is an unnatural assemblage of a strange variety of features, the most inconsistent and ill proportioned imaginable. Some of them are beautiful, and taken from the true original; others are borrowed from vice, and sometimes from what in vice is most shameful and deformed. Upon particular occasions, he avails himself of the first; and, collecting them into a separate point of light, is at pains to display their genuine beauty and excellence, and would effectually recommend them to our approbation and esteem, if we were willing to forget the base ingredients with which the whole composition so much abounds.

YET, even in this matter, our author is not always consistent with himself; for tho', when it suits his purpose, he distinguishes and illustrates certain moral species; at other times, he degrades the same, by confounding them with the basest alloy, and endeavouring to put all upon the same level.

THIS representation of virtue must put us in mind of the monstrous figure which Horace describes in the beginning of his art of poetry. To the human countenance, he conjoins the most incoherent parts taken from all the different species of animals; so that whatever beauty may strike us in the first, considered apart, yet, when the whole falls under view, it must appear altogether unnatural, ridiculous, and absurd.

Speſtatum admiſſi riſum teneatis amici.

BUT there is, in our author's ſcheme, perhaps ſtill a greater inconfiſtency than thoſe juſt now obſerved; and that is, after he has, with great labour and art, endeavoured to eſtabliſh ſome determined idea of virtue, he again unhinges all, and abandons this idea to the ſport of human paſſions and cuſtoms: he makes virtue entirely dependent upon the capricious humours of mankind, and even to take its form from the prevailing vices of the age. Thus is virtue rendered a very Proteus, ſo often changing its countenance, that it is impoſſible to fix it, or know what it is.

This naturally leads us to obſerve, what an unequal conflict a great genius is engaged in, when contending againſt the truth of things. It is like a ſtrong wave of the ſea bearing with all its force againſt a ſolid rock, the wave is broke, and its ſeveral parts daſh againſt one another with the wildeſt confuſion; but the rock ſtill remains firm and unmoved.

IN the miſt of ſo many inconfiſtencies as have been taken notice of, it muſt really diſtreſs the mind of man to imagine what our author means by virtue.

AND, when we carefully examine the ſcope and tendency of his whole reasonings, we can reſt upon no concluſion but the following one: that virtue is that conduct which leads us to make the beſt of life for ourſelves that we can, and which varies its meaſures and operations, according as immediate ſelf-interest, in the ſhape of pleaſure
or

or profit, may direct: and this just brings us back, to the old doctrine of Epicurus; there is no other difference, but that the Epicureans used the word pleasure, where our author adopts that of virtue. However, without regard to names, it is extremely reasonable to consider, what pleasure has to make for herself.

TORQUATUS, in Cicero's first book, *de finibus*, maintains her cause with great elegance and art; and, for this purpose, has borrowed from the virtues all the assistance he could. Pleasure, no doubt, has charms apt to captivate us; and so much the more dangerous that they strike at once, and gain an easy admittance into our breasts. And virtue, on the other hand, sometimes assumes a certain air of authority, not altogether agreeable to us, and often puts us upon hardships and dangers which we would very willingly be excused from.

WE have a beautiful and particular account of the competition betwixt these two famous rivals, in the celebrated allegory of Prodicus which Xenophon has preserved. And, in our calm thoughts, at least, we must applaud the preference given by Hercules to the one, in spite of all the specious pretences, and insinuating address of the other. In that beautiful passage, we find a fertile subject of noble reflexions, but it would be too tedious to pursue them here: far less is it our design to collect the many just observations that have been made both by the antients and moderns, in order to expose the folly, the uncertainty, and mischievous consequences of a course

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or rather, of a purpose of pleasure. We shall therefore endeavour to bring the matter to a shorter and more precise issue.

SELF-LOVE is a principle the most deeply rooted in the human heart, and it engages us to pursue happiness in an attachment to those objects that are calculated to bestow it; and to give these a due preference among themselves, in proportion to the degrees of happiness they produce. But let us love ourselves as much as we please, we cannot thereby constitute any thing our proper good. That depends upon the previous constitution of nature, and the agreement of things with which we are conversant, to the faculties and affections of our minds. If sensible pleasures are, upon the whole, greater than the pleasures of benevolence, justice, and every other social virtue, then we will prefer the first. But, as there is nothing in the nature of things to hinder the pleasures of virtue, to be more solid and sincere than those of sense, so, if we suppose it otherwise, this must argue a manifest disorder in the constitution, a latent disease which will render it ever sickly and imperfect; and, if not removed, must at last entirely destroy it. But, if we are happier in the exercise of the social virtues, than in the enjoyment of sensible pleasures, 'tis obvious what a powerful and universal influence this must have upon the perfection and happiness of human society. Every man, in this case, would be like some good angel to another, what humanity and benevolence, what order and justice, what confidence and security, must

must universally prevail? Whereas, if we reverse this supposition, all the contrary effects must take place. The love of sensible objects must prevail over the love of our species: and, in order to obtain these, benevolence must often give place to a cold indifference; nay even to inhumanity; justice must yield to fraud and oppression; and all confidence and security must be rendered entirely precarious.

It is therefore evident, that the pleasures of vice, that is, the prevailing influence of sensible pleasures immediately interferes with, and necessarily obstructs the happiness of mankind; whereas the pursuits of virtue directly promote that important end. Consequently it is to be considered as an invariable law of nature, that we ought, by all means, ever to keep our taste of sensible delight in a due subordination to the social virtues.

With this limitation, our enjoyment of the pleasures of sense or imagination will be innocent and lawful, and the more refined and sincere, the more these are kept in subjection to the nobler purposes of the mind. But, if sensual indulgence should prevail, the interests of virtue must decline, and the disorders of society will increase in proportion. Nor is it difficult to figure such an excess of false luxury as must subvert it entirely.

HUMAN laws indeed may counterbalance a considerable degree of it, and preserve society in something of a tolerable order. But this must be a violent and unnatural state, in which men will lead very uncomfortable lives, distracted betwixt the tyranny of two irreconcilable masters, the
strength

strength of their passions, and the terror of the laws.

AND if, in any circumstances, the first should get the better of the last, the most fatal consequences must attend the overthrow of such a violent constitution.

How excellent, then, must virtue appear? how preferable are her serene satisfactions to all the false pleasures of vice? She secures the soul from the lawless dominion of irregular passions; and, by maintaining the dignity and tranquillity of the mind, renders it susceptible of the most manly and refined enjoyments: whereas, a vicious luxury, when it prevails, lays waste every noble principle of the heart, and reduces the mind to the most abject, servile, and miserable condition imaginable.

WE have a mortifying example of this in the character of Mécænas, that celebrated patron of learning. He carried the refinements of luxury to the greatest excess, whereby he contracted such a peevish delicacy, as to lose the relish of every natural enjoyment, and to be rendered quite unhappy in himself and in every thing else. Seneca, upon several occasions, gives us striking instances of this; and, in his treatise of Providence, when he compares the condition of the greatly unfortunate Regulus with that of the dissolute Mécænas; he ventures to affirm, that vice had not as yet got such an entire possession of mankind, but that, if Providence should leave it to their own option, the greatest part would rather chuse the condition of Regulus than

than that of Mecænas. But the unlimited indulgence of pleasure not only hurts the vicious themselves, but also, by corrupting every principle of virtue, it spreads its fatal influence wide thro' society.

HAD Verres been confin'd to a private station, his luxury might have chiefly affected himself: but, as he was governor of a province, it put him upon every method of the most wicked extortion, whereby, instead of a father of his people, he became a most tyrannical oppressor.

ON the other hand, it is the peculiar aim, and genuine tendency of virtue to bless mankind; she preserves the order, and peace of society, even without the aid of human laws, and in a manner, much more natural, and agreeable than these can do; she governs, and directs every principle in man to some good end, and thereby forms, where she generally prevails, as it were, a heaven upon earth.

It may perhaps be said in opposition to all this, that our passions create such a strong, and immediate tie to sensual gratifications, that these more abstracted considerations, however just, are not able to break this connexion, and that therefore the love of pleasure must prevail over the love of justice, and the social affections; and tho' it be supposed otherwise with respect to a few, yet that would produce such an inconsiderable partial effect, as would be lost in the general prevalence of vice, and therefore could not merit great regard. Nothing can fully obviate this objection, but the admission of the religious principle, as it has been already explained. It must be considered as a
consequence

consequence of the wisdom and goodness of the constitution, that there is a foundation in nature, and sufficient motives provided, to restrain the vice and excess of passion, and to promote the improvements of virtue ; and, however the generous labours of the good may be thwarted, yet they will not be totally defeated by the general prevalence of vice, and, with regard to themselves at least, they never will be lost. It must nevertheless be owned, that, in our improvements in virtue, tho' upon the justest motives, there will often be pain and difficulty, toil and fatigue, in carrying on a kind of warfare against opposing passions. This is indeed the case in attaining to any thing that is excellent. But those labours, and difficulties are not the native product of virtue, they spring only from the violence of passion, which is hard to be subdued. Besides, they will gradually diminish, as we firmly pursue our course, and, when virtue shall gain its full effect, an entire happiness shall be its purchase, and reward, which no evil passions shall ever disturb. Virtue is therefore as amiable in itself, and as lovely in its immediate aspect, as it is happy in its consequences. She wears a serene smile in her countenance, never clouded with the least gloom, but what she may borrow from a mixture of vice. Even when she feels the distresses of others, and mixes compassionate tears with theirs, yet, with Mr. Pope, we must allow,

*The broadest mirth unthinking folly wears,
Less pleasing far than virtue's very tears.*

She

She is indeed best satisfied with the purest pleasures, but does not altogether reject those of an inferior nature, except such as manifestly hurt ourselves, or are in the least injurious to another.

SHE sweetens all the cares, and is our most faithful companion and support, in the discharge of all the duties of life. And, as she secures the peace and tranquillity of our own minds, so, at the same time, she recommends us to the favour both of God, and man ; a material circumstance, which Xenophon particularly observes in the last mentioned passage.

'TIS true, an Epicurean can never consider things in this light. He limits his scheme of happiness to such a short, and uncertain period of time, as very little deserves the thought and care of that being, before whom an unbounded prospect opens up.

IF he thinks fit to cultivate any species of moral virtue, this he does by a wretched calculation, how much of it may serve his present purpose, and his selfish plan of life : but this is hypocrisy, cunning, and any thing but virtue.

AN Epicurean is a solitary, selfish being, struck off, as it were, from the order of the universe, which he does not believe. And, when he denies a God in the world, he becomes a God to himself, and all the lines of his conduct centre and terminate in his own person.

THIS selfishness is such a natural consequence of that philosophy, if it may be so called, that the Epicureans themselves were forced to admit it, and made the best shift they could to maintain it.

If we suppose their scheme to be true, it is not possible, upon the principles of human nature, to support a virtuous action, if it is hurtful to us; nor to decline an act of injustice, if it is immediately beneficial.

IF you observe a person, says Carneades, by whose death you may acquire a great estate, imprudently going to sit down upon an asp, will you warn him of his danger? Cicero justly intimates, that a virtuous man will do this; but that an Epicurean, upon his principles, will not do it; because his conduct must for ever remain a secret.

SELF-REVERENCE, a regard for one's own conscience, is a natural principle, and capable of great improvement, from reflection upon a regular and wise constitution; but a contrary hypothesis will have an opposite effect, and tend to weaken, and destroy that excellent principle.

IF we have no scheme of happiness, but what the pleasures of this life can bestow, and if we think there is no being in the universe conscious of our thoughts but ourselves, conscience, in this case, must be destitute of a solid support, and lie open, and unguarded to the assaults of worldly interest, to which, as being our chief good, duty will of course give way. The same observation may be easily applied to every other principle of morality.

BUT an Epicurean perhaps may say, whatever be the natural consequences of my opinion, I cannot embrace the scheme you so much boast of; because it is not real. It is a dream, a delusion, at best, the gay vision of a lively imagination. Whether

ther this be so or not, this at least is certain, that this scheme, which the Epicurean pronounces false, lays a solid foundation for the most extensive improvement in every virtue, which his hypothesis intirely counteracts.

How must the authority of conscience be supported, so as to gain an intire ascendant over the heart, when we consider, that God, the proper guardian of right and wrong, is the intimate witness of our thoughts, immediately conscious to all our purposes and designs? This reflexion must surely render the internal principle of virtue firm, constant and uniform, and make it the very complexion of the soul, such as it is nobly described by Persius.

*Compositum jus fasque animi, sanctosque recessus
Mentis, et incoctum generoso pectus honesto.*

In this case, a good man will not much mind, whether his conduct lies open to the view of others, or not. Far less will he estimate the quantity of his virtue by the sordid summation of the profit or pleasure it may procure. No; his virtue will be such a noble, pure, and extensive principle, that mankind may depend upon it in all circumstances, and at all hazards; or, at least, if there should be any defect in it, that must be placed to the present imperfect condition of humanity, and not to the weakness of the scheme itself, which naturally tends to this degree of improvement.

If it be, then, but a dream, a delusion, it is yet so necessary to the operations and improvement of virtue, that it would be the greatest
curse

curse to mankind to be awakened out of this dream. It is a delusion so essential to the interests of society, that it should be preserved by the strictest sanctity, from the least violation, as a sacred Palladium upon which the fate of our world depends.

BUT, after all, how can that be a dream, or delusion, which has such solid and substantial effects? which alone can account for the faculties, desires, and affections of the human mind? which is necessary to preserve the analogy of nature, and the order and design of the moral world? nay, without which, it is not possible to secure virtue, at least in many instances, even from ridicule and contempt?

IT must, at any rate, certainly be admitted, that nothing can be more excellent than the genuine object of social virtue, the good of others, the good of society. And, tho' the immediate influence of this object may not always be sufficient to secure and engage the heart, in opposition to other pleasures and pursuits; yet, if we trace to their proper source all the motives which concur to support it, and view them in their just extent, they must appear fully sufficient to accomplish this effect. By the due improvement, therefore, of these motives, we may be enabled to establish in the soul a sure and solid source and principle of virtue, that is, a firm, constant, and deliberate purpose and resolution to do good, and to prefer what tends to the general good, in a competition with any private gratification.

SUCH

SUCH a purpose and resolution as this, is the just and proper spring of virtue: it is the result of thought and reflexion, and naturally engages the mind to a constant attention to those means that may best promote the favourite end in view.

ALL the governing faculties of the soul are hereby secured to the cause of virtue. And we may thus acquire a firm, constant, and uniform character; which, tho' it may sometimes be ruffled by passions, or disconcerted by particular accidents, yet it will ever be our care to recollect ourselves in the best manner we can, and to regain our proper situation. We can never trust our virtue to particular affections; for, however useful or agreeable these may be in themselves, yet we are not sure of their just and regular operations: these can only be secured by a constant attention to the object of virtue, by a firm and determined purpose ever to do what is best. It is true, we praise good temper, and justly too; because we feel the happy effects of it. These sensibly strike us, whilst the inward purpose of the soul lies concealed from our view.

BUT, when we reflect with calmness and attention, we must set a much higher value upon that inward deliberate principle we have been considering, which alone can give firmness and constancy to a natural good temper, and likewise reform and rectify one that is depraved.

THE good effects which proceed from this principle, are like streams of water which flow from a secret, but perennial fountain; and will therefore never cease to flow: whereas, the good effects

effects of mere temper are like streams that have no sufficient source, which, tho' they may please in the mean time, yet their constancy is not to be depended on.

THE firm purpose of doing good, established in the heart, places an intelligent creature still in a nobler point of light; because he thereby bears the fairest image of the Deity, and resembles God in that for which we love and esteem him the most.

AN inanimate creature, however excellent, or even glorious it may appear, must yet claim a very inferior degree of esteem, when regarded as devoid of a designing principle of goodness. We are apt to fall prostrate before the sun, if considered as endued with intelligence; but, when we rectify that mistake we transfer our homage and adoration to that wise and good being who appointed the nature and admirable uses of that glorious luminary. Other things may be the unmeaning instruments of good, but virtue is that active principle whose purpose and province it is to produce it.

VIRTUE is the regular and faithful execution of the duties and offices arising from every relation and character in life. Where this uniformly takes place, such an agreeable union and harmony must result from it, as cannot fail to establish among mankind a degree of happiness easier to be conceived than expressed: and, if the immediate sense of an object, so noble and excellent in its own nature, is not sufficient to influence our conduct, in opposition to more particular pursuits and gratifications; yet, if we enlarge our
mind

mind by the admission of the sentiments of religion, these must have a sufficient energy so to refine and animate the more immediate springs of morality, as to give them their just and proper ascendant over the heart and life. In this view, virtue is, as it were, a sensible ray of the divinity which dissipates pride, malice, envy, and every selfish and evil passion, and, by representing moral objects in their most amiable colours, rekindles and improves every contrary good affection.

Thus a constant determination and intention to do good, is established in the mind; whereby it naturally diffuses peace, joy, and happiness through the moral system. Virtue is, therefore, the proper principle, and even the very soul of social bliss; nay, when we view it in its full extent, it is the brightest ingredient in the idea we are capable to form of heaven.

AND, as vice is just the reverse of virtue, the slightest reflexion upon what has been said, must discover their difference in the strongest light, and convince us, that, as the one is our greatest good, so, the other must necessarily be our greatest ill.

F I N I S.



